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Frances Marchess
THE

LIFE

AND

POSTHUMOUS WRITINGS

OF

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.

.....

BY WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

.....

VOL. I.

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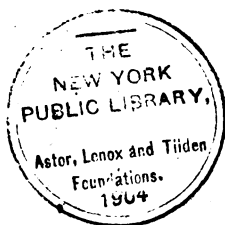
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W. COWPER.

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AN
INTRODUCTORY LETTER

TO THE

Right Honourable Earl COWPER.

YOUR family, my Lord, our country itself, and the whole literary world, sustained such a loss in the death of that amiable man and enchanting author who forms the subject of these volumes, as inspired the friends of genius and virtue with universal concern. It soon became a general wish, that some authentic and copious memorial of a character so highly interesting should be produced with all becoming dispatch; not only to render due honour to the dead, but to alleviate the regret of a nation taking a just and liberal pride in the reputation of a poet, who had obtained and deserved her applause, her esteem, her affection. If this laudable wish was very sensibly felt by the public at large, it glowed with peculiar warmth and eagerness in the bosom of the few who had been so fortunate as to enjoy an intimacy with Cowper in some unclouded periods of

his life, and who knew, from such an intimacy, that a lively sweetness and sanctity of spirit were as truly the characteristics of his social enjoyments, as they are allowed to constitute a principal charm in his poetical productions.—It has justly been regarded as a signal blessing, to have possessed the perfect esteem and confidence of such a man : and not long after his decease, one of his particular friends presumed to suggest to an accomplished lady, nearly related both to him and to your Lordship, that she herself might be the biographer the most worthy of the poet. The long intimacy and correspondence which she enjoyed with him, from their lively hours of infantile friendship to the dark evening of his wonderfully chequered life ; her cultivated and affectionate mind, which led her to take peculiar delight and interest in the merit and the reputation of his writings ; and, lastly, that generous attachment to her afflicted relation which induced her to watch over his disordered health, in a period of its most calamitous depression ;—these circumstances, united, seemed to render it desirable that she should assume the office of Cowper's biographer ; having such advantages for the perfect execution of that very delicate office as, perhaps, no other memorialist could possess in an equal degree. For the interest of literature, and for the honour of many poets, whose memories

INTRODUCTORY LETTER.

have suffered from some biographers of a very different description, we may wish that the extensive series of poetical biography had been frequently enriched by the memoirs of such remembrancers as feel only the influence of tenderness and truth. Some poets, indeed, of recent times, have been happy in this most desirable advantage. The Scottish favourite of nature, the tender and impetuous Burns, has found, in Dr. Currie, an ingenuous, eloquent, affectionate biographer; and in a lady also (whose memoir of her friend, the bard, is very properly annexed to his life) a zealous and graceful advocate, singularly happy in vindicating his character from invidious detraction. We may observe, to the honour of Scotland, that her national enthusiasm has, for some years, been very laudably exerted in cherishing the memory of her departed poets.—But to return to the lady who gave rise to this remark. The natural diffidence of her sex, uniting with extreme delicacy of health, induced her, eager as she was to promote the celebrity of her deceased relation, to shrink from the idea of submitting herself, as an author, to the formidable eye of the public. Her knowledge of the very cordial regard with which Cowper has honoured her, as one of his most confidential friends, led her to request that she might assign to me that arduous office, which she candidly confessed she had not the resolution

to assume. She confided to my care such materials for the work in question, as her affinity to the deceased had thrown into her hands. In receiving a collection of many private letters, and of several posthumous little poems, in the well-known characters of that beloved correspondent, 'at the sight of whose hand I have often exulted, I felt the blended emotions of melancholy regret, and of awful pleasure. Yes, I was pleased that these affecting papers were entrusted to my care, because some incidents induce me to believe that, if their revered author had been solicited to appoint a biographer for himself, he would have assigned to me this honourable task. Yet, honourable as I consider it, I was perfectly aware of the difficulties and the dangers attending it. One danger, indeed, appeared to me of such a nature as to require perpetual caution as I advanced : I mean the danger of being led, in writing as the biographer of my friend, to speak infinitely too much of myself. To avoid the offensive failing of egotism, I had resolved, at first, to make no inconsiderable sacrifice, and to suppress, in his letters, every particle of praise bestowed upon myself. I soon found it impossible to do so without injuring the tender and generous spirit of my friend. I have, therefore, suffered many expressions of his affectionate partiality towards me to appear, at the hazard of being censured for in-

ordinate vanity. To obviate such a censure, I will only say, that I have endeavoured to excute what I regard as a mournful duty, as if I were under the immediate and visible direction of the most pure, the most truly modest, and the most gracefully virtuous mind, that I had ever the happiness of knowing in the form of a manly friend. It is certainly my wish that these volumes may obtain the entire approbation of the world ; but it is infinitely more my desire and ambition to render them exactly such as I think most likely to gratify the conscious spirit of Cowper himself in a superior existence. The person who recommended it to his female relation to continue her exemplary regard to the poet, by appearing as his biographer, advised her to relate the particulars of his life in the form of letters addressed to your Lordship. He cited, on the occasion, a striking passage from the memoirs of Gibbon, in which that great historian pays a just and a splendid compliment to one of the early English poets, who, in the tenderness and purity of his heart, and in the vivid powers of description, may be thought to resemble Cowper. The passage I allude to is this ; “ The nobility of the Spencers has been illustrated and enriched by the trophies of Marlborough ; but I exhort them to consider the Fairy Queen as the most precious jewel of their coronet.” If this lively metaphor is just in every point of view, we may regard *The Task* as a jewel of

the lapse of a few centuries, they will shine only like very distant constellations, merely visible in the vast expanse of history! But, at that time, the poet of whom I speak, will continue to sparkle in the eyes of all men, like the radiant star of the evening, perpetually hailed by the voice of gratitude, affection, and delight. There is a principle of unperishable vitality (if I may use such an expression) in the compositions of Cowper, which must ensure to them in future ages, what we have seen them so happily acquire and maintain in the present—universal admiration and love! His poetry is to the heart and the fancy, what the moral essays of Bacon are to the understanding, a never-
-cloying feast!

“As if increase of appetite had grown

“By what it fed on.”

Like them it comes “home to the business and bosom of every man;” by possessing the rare and double talent to familiarize and endear the most awful subjects, and to dignify the most familiar, the poet naturally becomes a favourite with readers of every description. His works must interest every nation under heaven, where his sentiments are understood, and where the feelings of humanity prevail. Yet their author is eminently an Englishman, in the noblest sense of that ho-

blest sense of that honourable appellation. He loved the constitution; he revered the religion of his country; he was tenderly, and generously alive to her real interest and honour; and perhaps of her many admirable poets, not one has touched her foibles, and celebrated her perfections, with a spirit so truly filial.—But I perceive that I am in danger of going far beyond my design in this introductory letter, for it was my intention not to enter into the merits of his character here, but to inform you in what manner I wish to make that character display itself to my readers, as far as possible, in his own most interesting language.—Perhaps no man ever possessed the powers of description in a higher degree, both in verse and prose. By weaving into the texture of these Memoirs, an extensive selection of his private letters, and several of his posthumous poems, I trust that a faithful representation of him has been formed, where the most striking features will appear the work of his own inimitable hand. The result of the whole production will, I am confident, establish one most satisfactory truth, interesting to society in general, and to your Lordship in particular: the truth I mean is expressed in the final verse of an epitaph, which the hand of friendship inscribed to your excellent relation:

“His virtues form’d the magic of his song.”

May the affectionate zeal with which I have endeavoured to render all the justice in my power to his variety of merit, atone for whatever deficiencies may be found in this imperfect attempt, and lead both your Lordship and our Country to honour with some degree of approbation,

Your very faithful servant,

WILLIAM HAYLEY.

THE
LIFE OF COWPER.

PART THE FIRST.

INGENIUM PROBITAS, ARTEMQUE MODESTIA
VINCIT.

THE family of COWPER appears to have held, for several centuries, a respectable rank among the merchants and gentry of England. We learn from the life of the first Earl Cowper, in the *Biographia Britannica*, that his ancestors were inhabitants of Sussex, in the reign of Edward the Fourth. The name is found repeatedly among the Sheriffs of London; and John Cowper, who resided as a country gentleman in Kent, was created a Baronet by King Charles the First, in 1641. But the family rose to higher distinction in the beginning of the last century, by the remarkable circumstance of producing two brothers, who both obtained a seat in the house of peers by eminence in the profession of the law. William, the eldest, became Lord High Chancellor in 1707. Spencer Cowper, the youngest, was appointed Chief Justice of Chester in 1717, and afterwards a judge in the court of Common Pleas, being permitted, by the particular favour of the King, to

LIFE OF COWPER.

two offices to the end of his life. He died at St. Dunstons Inn, on the 10th of December, 1728, and first brought his name to our notice as the immediate ancestor of the Poet. By Theodora, his second wife, the daughter of George Stepney, Esq. Judge Cowper left several children; among them a daughter Judith, who, at the age of eighteen, discovered a striking talent for poetry, the praise of her cotemporary poets Pope and Dryden. This lady, the wife of colonel Madan, transferred her own poetical and devout spirit to her daughter, Anne, who was married to her cousin, John Cowper, and whose amiable character will unfold itself in the course of this work, as the friend and correspondent of her more eminent relation, the second child of the judge, destined to honour the name of Cowper, by displaying, with peculiar purity and fervour, the noble enthusiasm of poetry and devotion. The father of the great author to whom I allude, was John Cowper, the judge's second son, who took his degrees in divinity, was chaplain to King George the Second, and resided at his Rectory of Great Berkhamstead, in Hertfordshire, the scene of the Poet's infancy, which he has commemorated in a singular beautiful and pathetic composition on the portrait of his mother.

Where once we dwelt our name is heard no more
Children not thine have trod my nurs'ry floor,
And where the gard'ner Robin, day by day,
Came to school along the public way;
Lighted with my bauble coach, and wrapt
Scarlet mantle warm, and velvet cap,
Is now become a history little known,
That once we call'd the past'ral house our own
Fort-liv'd possession! but the record fair
That memory keeps of all thy kindness there

Still outlives many a storm that has effac'd
A thousand other themes less deeply trac'd.
Thy nightly visits to my chamber made,
That thou might'st know me safe and warmly laid ;
Thy morning bounties, ere I left my home,
The biscuit, or confectionary plumb ;
The fragrant waters on my cheeks bestow'd
By thy own hand, till fresh they shone and glow'd.
All this, and more endearing still than all,
Thy constant flow of love, that knew no fall ;
Ne'er roughen'd by those cataracts and breaks,
That humour interpos'd too often makes.
All this, still legible in memory's page,
And still to be so to my latest age,
Adds joy to duty, makes me glad to pay
Such honours to thee as my numbers may.

The parent whose merits are so feelingly recorded by the filial tenderness of the Poet, was Ann, daughter of Roger Donne, Esq. of Ludham Hall, in Norfolk. This lady, whose family is said to have been originally from Wales, was married, in the bloom of youth, to Dr. Cowper ; after giving birth to several children, who died in their infancy, and leaving two sons, William, the immediate subject of this memorial, born at Berkhamstead on the 26th of November, N. S. 1731, and John (whose accomplishments and memorable death will be described in the course of this compilation), she died in childbed at the early age of thirty-four, in 1737. Those who delight in contemplating the best affections of our nature, will ever admire the tender sensibility with which the Poet has acknowledged his obligation to this amiable mother, in a poem composed more than fifty years after her decease. Readers of this description may find a pleasure in observing how the praise so

LIFE OF COWPER.

stowed on this tender parent, at so late a period confirmed (if praise so unquestionable may be deemed a confirmation) by another poetical record of merit, which the hand of affinity and affection placed upon her tomb. A record written at a time when the Poet, who was destined to prove, in his old age, her more powerful eulogist, had hardly begun to show the dawn of that genius which, after years of affliction, arose like a star emerging from temporary darkness.

A monument of Mrs. Cowper, erected by her husband in the chancel of St. Peter's church, at Berkhamstead, contains the following verses, composed by a young lady, her niece, the late Lady Walsingham:

Here lies, in early years bereft of life,
The best of mothers, and the kindest wife;
Who neither knew, nor practis'd any art,
Secure in all she wish'd, her husband's heart.
Her love to him still prevalent in death,
Pray'd Heaven to bless him with her latest breath.
Still was she studious never to offend,
And glad of an occasion to commend:
With ease would pardon injuries receiv'd,
Nor e'er was cheerful when another griev'd.
Despising state, with her own lot content,
Enjoy'd the comforts of a life well-spent.
Resign'd when Heaven demanded back her breath,
Her mind heroic 'midst the pangs of death.
Whoe'er thou art that dost this Tomb draw
O stay awhile, and shed a friendly tear,
These lines, tho' weak, are as herself since

The truth and tenderness of this Epitaph will more than compensate with every candid reader the imperfection ascribed to it by its young and modest Author. To have lost a parent of a character so virtuous and endearing, at an early period of his childhood, was the prime misfortune of Cowper, and what contributed, perhaps, in the highest degree, to the dark colouring of his subsequent life. The influence of a good mother on the first years of her children, whether nature has given them peculiar strength, or peculiar delicacy of frame, is equally inestimable: It is the prerogative and the felicity of such a mother to temper the arrogance of the strong, and to dissipate the timidity of the tender. The infancy of Cowper was delicate in no common degree, and his constitution discovered, at a very early season, that morbid tendency to diffidence, to melancholy, and despair, which darkened as he advanced in years into periodical fits of the most deplorable depression.

It may afford an ample field for useful reflection to observe, in speaking of a child, that he was destined to excite, in his progress through life, the highest degrees of admiration and of pity—of admiration for mental excellence, and of pity for mental disorder.

We understand human nature too imperfectly to ascertain in what measure the original structure of his frame, and the casual incidents of his life, contributed to the happy perfection of his genius, or to the calamitous eclipses of his effulgent mind. Yet such were the talents, the virtues, and the misfortunes of this wonderful person, that it is hardly possible for Biography, extensive as her province is, to speak of a more interesting individual, or to select a subject on which it may be more difficult to satisfy a variety of readers. In feeling all the weight of this difficulty, I may still be

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that I shall not utterly disappoint his sincerers, if the success of my endeavours to make me known, and more beloved, is proportioned, degree, to the zeal with which I cultivated his lip, and to the gratification that I feel in recalling my own recollection the delightful extent and variety of his literary powers, with the equally desirable sweetness of his social character.

the powerful influence of such recollection has borne me imperceptibly from the proper course of my life.—I return to the childhood of Cowper. In quitting the house of his parents, he was sent to a notable school at Market-Street, in Hertfordshire, under the care of Dr. Pitman, and it is probable that he was removed from it in consequence of an ocular complaint. From a circumstance which he relates of himself at that period, in a letter written to me in 1792, seems to have been in danger of resembling Milton in the misfortune of blindness, as he resembled him, more happily, in the fervency of a devout and poetical spirit.

“I have been all my life,” says Cowper, “subject to inflammations of the eye, and in my boyish days had corks on both that threatened to cover them. My father, alarmed for the consequences, sent me to a celebrated oculist of great renown at that time, in whose house I abode two years, but to no good purpose. From thence I went to Westminster school, where, at the age of fourteen, the small-pox seized me, and proved fatal to the other oculist of the two, for it delivered me from

Not, however, from great liability to inflammation, to which I am in a degree still subject, though less than formerly, since I have been constantly in the use of a hot foot-bath every night the last thing I am going to rest.

It appears a strange process in education to send a tender child from a long residence in the house of a female oculist immediately into all the hardships that a little delicate boy must have to encounter at a public school. But the mother of Cowper was dead, and fathers, though good men, are, in general, utterly unfit to manage their young and tender orphans. The little Cowper was sent to his first school in the year of his mother's death, and how ill-suited the scene was to his particular character, must be evident to all who have heard him describe his sensations in that season of life, which is often, very erroneously, extolled as the happiest period of human existence. He has been frequently heard to lament the persecution that he sustained in his childish years, from the cruelty of his school-fellows, in the two scenes of his education. His own forcible expression represented him at Westminster as not daring to raise his eye above the shoe-buckle of the other boys, who were too apt to tyrannize over his gentle spirit. The acuteness of his feelings in his childhood rendered those important years (which might have produced, under their cultivation, a series of lively enjoyments) miserable years of increasing timidity and depression, which, in the most cheerful hours of his advanced life, he could hardly describe to an intimate friend, without shuddering at the recollection of his early wretchedness. Yet to this, perhaps, the world is indebted for the pathetic and moral eloquence of those forcible admonitions to parents which give interest and beauty to his admirable Poem on Public Schools. Poets may be said to realize, in some measure, the poetical idea of the Nightingale singing with a thorn at her breast, as their most exquisite songs have often originated in the acuteness of their personal sufferings. Of this obvious truth, the Poem I have just

mentioned is a very memorable example ; and if readers have thought the Poet too severe in his tures on that system of education to which we some of the most accomplished characters that gave celebrity to a civilized nation, such readers will candidly reconcile to that moral severity of reproof in recollecting that it flowed from severe personal experience, united to the purest spirit of philanthropy and patriotism.

Cowper's exhortation to fathers to educate their sons, is a model of persuasive eloquence, and not inferior to similar exhortations in the eloquent Rousseau or in the accomplished translator of Tansillo's *Letter of the Nurse*, by which these enchanting writers have induced, and will continue to induce, so many mothers to give a polished life to suckle their own children. Yet since as these exhortations may be esteemed, in their benevolent design, and in their graceful expression, there are two powerful reasons, which must in all probability prevent their being attended with similar success. In the first place, woman has, in general, much stronger propensity than man to the perfect discharge of parental duties ; and, secondly, the avocations of mothers are so imperious, in their different lines of life, that few of them could command sufficient leisure (if nature has furnished them with talents and inclination) to discharge the arduous office of preceptor to their own children. As arduous and irksome as the office is generally, there is perhaps no species of mental labour so agreeably sweet in its success ; and the Poet justly ex-

O 'tis a sight to be with joy perus'd,

A sight surpass'd by none that we can

A Father blest with an ingenuous Son ;
Father, and Friend, and Tutor, all in one.

Had the constitutional shyness and timidity of Cowper been gradually dispelled by the rare advantages that he describes in these verses, his early years would certainly have been happier ; but men who are partial to public schools will probably doubt if any system of private tuition could have proved more favourable to the future display of his genius, than such an education as he received at Westminster, where, however the peculiar delicacy of his nature might expose him to an extraordinary portion of juvenile discomfort, he undoubtedly acquired the accomplishment and the reputation of scholarship, with the advantage of being known and esteemed by some aspiring youths of his own age, who were destined to become conspicuous and powerful in the splendid scenes of the world.

With these acquisitions he left Westminster, at the age of eighteen, in 1749 ; and, as if destiny had determined that all his early situations in life should be peculiarly irksome to his delicate feelings, and tend rather to promote than to counteract a constitutional tendency to a morbid sensibility in his frame, he was removed from a public school to the office of an attorney. He resided three years in the house of a Mr. Chapman, to whom he was engaged by articles for that time. Here he was placed for the study of a profession which nature seemed resolved that he never should practise.

The law is a kind of soldiership, and like the profession of arms, it may be said to require for the constitution of its heroes

“ A frame of adamant, a soul of fire.”

LIFE OF COWPER.

the soul of Cowper had indeed its fire, but fire so refined and ethereal, that it could not be expected to shine in the gross atmosphere of worldly contention. Perhaps there never existed a mortal who, possessing, with a refined person, intellectual powers naturally strong, and highly cultivated, was so utterly unfit to encounter the trials and perplexities of public life. But the extreme modesty and shyness of his nature, which disqualified him for scenes of business and ambition, endeared him inexpressibly to those who had opportunities to enjoy his society, and faculties to appreciate the uncommon excellence of his interesting character.

Deserved as he was, to an extraordinary and painful degree, his heart and mind were yet admirably formed by nature for all the refined intercourses and confidential delights, both of friendship and of love :

though apparently formed to possess, and to communicate an extraordinary portion of mortal felicity, the accidents of his life were such, that, conspiring with the peculiarities of his nature, they rendered him, at different times, the most unhappy of mankind. The variety and depth of his sufferings, in early life, from extreme tenderness of heart, are very forcibly displayed in the following verses, which formed part of a letter to one of his female relations at the time they were composed. The letter has perished ; and the verses owe their preservation to the affectionate memory of the lady to whom they were addressed.

Gloom'd, as I am, in solitude to waste
The present moments, and regret the past ;
Depriv'd of ev'ry joy I valued most,
My Friend torn from me, and my Mistress lost ;
All not this gloom, I wear, this anxious mien,
The dull effect of humour, or of spleen !

Still, still I mourn, with each returning day,
 Him* snatch'd by Fate, in early youth, away.
 And her—through tedious years of doubt and pain,
 Fix'd in her choice, and faithful—but in vain!
 O prone to pity, generous, and sincere,
 Whose eye ne'er yet refused the wretch a tear;
 Whose heart the real claim of friendship knows,
 Nor thinks a lover's are but fancied woes;
 See me—ere yet my destin'd course half done,
 Cast forth a wand'rer on a wild unknown!
 See me neglected on the world's rude coast,
 Each dear companion of my voyage lost!
 Nor ask why clouds of sorrow shade my brow!
 And ready tears wait only leave to flow!
 Why all that sooths a heart, from anguish free,
 All that delights the happy—palls with me!

When he quitted the house of the solicitor, where he was placed to acquire the rudiments of litigation, he settled himself in chambers of the Inner-Temple, as a regular student of law; but although he resided there to the age of thirty-three, he rambled (according to his own colloquial account of his early years) from the thorny road of his austere patroness, Jurisprudence, into the primrose paths of Literature and Poetry. Even ere his native diffidence confined him to social and subordinate exertions. He wrote and printed both prose and verse, as the concealed assistant of less diffident authors. During his residence in the Temple, he cultivated the friendship of some eminent literary characters, who had been his school-fellows at Westminster, particularly Colman, Bonnel, Thornton, and Lloyd.

* Sir William Russel, the favourite friend of the young Poet.

LIFE OF COWPER.

His regard to the two first induced him to contribute their periodical publication, entitled the Connoisseur three excellent papers, which the reader will find in the Appendix to these volumes, and from which he perceives, that Cowper had such talents for this pleasant and useful species of composition, as might have rendered him a worthy associate, in such labours Addison himself, whose graceful powers have never been surpassed in that province of literature, which may still be considered as peculiarly his own.

The intimacy of Cowper and Lloyd may have given rise perhaps to some early productions of our Poet, which it may now be hardly possible to ascertain; the probability of this conjecture arises from the necessity of Lloyd, and the affectionate liberality of his friend. As the former was tempted, by his narrow finances to engage in periodical works, it is highly probable that the pen of Cowper, ever ready to second the charitable wishes of his heart, might be devoted to the service of an indigent Author, whom he appears to have loved with a very cordial affection. I find that affection greeably displayed in a sportive poetical epistle, which may claim a place in this volume, not only as an specimen of Cowper's poetry, but as exhibiting a specimen of his own mind at the age of twenty three.

AN EPISTLE TO ROBERT LLOYD, ESQ

'Tis not that I design to rob
Thee of thy birth-right, gentle Bob,
For thou art born sole heir, and single,
Of dear Mat Prior's easy jingle;
Nor that I mean, while thus I knit
My thread-bare sentiments together,

To show my genius, or my wit,
 When God and you know I have neither ;
 Or such, as might be better shown
 By letting Poetry alone.

'Tis not with either of these views
 That I presume to address the Muse ;
 But to divert a fierce banditti,
 (Sworn foes to every thing that's witty !)
 That, with a black, infernal train,
 Make cruel inroads in my brain,
 And daily threaten to drive thence
 My little garrison of sense :
 The fierce banditti that I mean,
 Are gloomy thoughts led on by spleen.
 Then there's another reason yet,
 Which is, that I may fairly quit
 The debt, which justly became due
 The moment when I heard from you :
 And you might grumble, crony mine,
 If paid in any other coin ;
 Since twenty sheets of lead, God knows
 (I would say twenty sheets of prose)
 Can ne'er be deem'd worth half so much
 As one of gold, and yours was such.
 Thus, the preliminaries settled,
 I fairly find myself *pitch-kettled* ;*
 And cannot see, tho' few see better,
 How I shall hammer out a letter.

First, for a thought—since all agree—
 A thought—I have it—let me see—

* *Pitch-kettled*, a favourite phrase at the time when
 is Epistle was written, expressive of being puzzled ;
 what, in the Spectator's time, would have been call-
 | *bamboozled*.

'Tis gone again—Plague on't ! I thought
I had it—but I have it not.
Dame Gurton thus, and Hodge her son,
That useful thing, her needle, gone ;
Rake well the cinders ;—sweep the floor,
And sift the dust behind the door ;
While eager Hodge beholds the prize
In old Grimalkin's glaring eyes ;
And Gammer finds it on her knees
In every shining straw she sees.
'This simile were apt enough ;
But I've another critic-proof !
The Virtuoso thus at noon
Broiling beneath a July sun,
The gilded Butterfly pursues,
O'er hedge and ditch, through gaps and me
And after many a vain essay
To captivate the tempting prey,
Gives him at length the lucky pat,
And has him safe, beneath his hat :
'Then lifts it gently from the ground ;
But ah ! 'tis lost as soon as found ;
Culprit his liberty regains,
Flits out of sight, and mocks his pains.
The sense was dark ; 'twas therefore fit
With simile t' illustrate it ;
But as too much obscures the sight,
As often as too little light,
We have our similies cut short,
For matters of more grave import.
That Matthew's numbers run with ease,
Each man of common sense agrees ;
All men of common sense allow,
'That Robert's lines are easy too :
Where then the preference shall we place ?
Or how do justice in this case ?

Matthew (says Fame,) with endless pains,
 Smooth'd, and refin'd, the meanest strains ;
 Nor suffer'd one ill-chosen rhyme
 T' escape him at the idlest time ;
 And thus o'er all a lustre cast,
 That, while the language lives, shall last.
 An't please your Ladyship (quoth I,)
 For 'tis my business to reply ;
 Sure so much labour, so much toil,
 Bespeak at least a stubborn soil :
 Theirs be the laurel-wreath decreed,
 Who both write well, and write full speed !
 Who throw their Helicon about
 As freely as a conduit spout !
 Friend Robert, thus like *chien savant*,
 Let's fall a poem *en passant* ;
 Nor needs his genuine ore refine,
 'Tis ready polish'd from the mine.

It may be proper to observe, that this lively praise on the playful talent of Lloyd was written six years before the amiable but unfortunate author published the best of his serious poems, "The Actor," a composition of considerable merit, which proved a prelude to the more powerful and popular Rosciad of Churchill ; who after surprising Lloyd as a rival, assisted him very liberally as a friend. While Cowper resided in the Temple, he seems to have been personally acquainted with the most eminent writers of the time ; and the interest which he probably took in their recent works tended to increase his powerful though diffident passion for poetry, and to train him imperceptibly to that masterly command of language, which time and chance led him to display, almost as a new talent, at the age of fifty. One of his first associates has informed me, that before he quitted London he frequently amused himself

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translation from ancient and modern poets, and of his composition to the service of any friend who requested it. In a copy of Duncombe's Horace, printed 1759, I find two of the Satires translated by Cowper. The Duncombes, father and son, were amiable scholars of a Hertfordshire family; and the elder Duncombe, in his printed letters, mentions Dr. Cowper (the father of the Poet) as one of his friends, who possessed a talent for poetry, exhibiting, at the same time, a respectable specimen of his verse. The Duncombes, in the preface to their Horace, impute the size of their work to the poetical contributions of their friends. At what time the two Satires I have mentioned were translated by William Cowper, I have not been able to ascertain; but they are worthy his pen, and will, therefore appear in the Appendix to these volumes.

Speaking of his own early life, in a letter to Mr. Park, dated March, 1792, Cowper says, with that extreme modesty which was one of his most remarkable characteristics, "From the age of twenty to thirty-three, I was occupied, or ought to have been, in the study of the law; from thirty-three to sixty I spent time in the country, where my reading has been my only apology for idleness; and where, when I had written either a Magazine or a Review, I was sometimes a painter, at others a bird-cage maker, or a gardener, or a drawer of landscapes. At fifty years of age I commenced an author: it is a whim that has since become my longest and best, and will probably be my last."

Lightly as this most modest of Poets has spoken of his own exertions, and late as he appeared to the world in producing his chief poetical works, he had from nature a contemplative spirit, perpetually acquiring a store of mental treasure, which he unveiled, to delight and astonish the world with unexpected magnificence. Even his juvenile ver-

ver a mind deeply impressed with sentiments of piety ;
and, in proof of this assertion, I select a few stanzas
from an Ode written, when he was very young, on
reading Sir Charles Grandison.

To rescue from the tyrant's sword
Thè oppress'd ; —unseen, and unimplor'd,
To cheer the face of woe ;
From lawless insult to defend
An orphan's right—a fallen friend,
And a forgiven foe ;

These, these distinguish, from the crowd,
And these alone, the great and good,
The guardians of mankind ;
Whose bosoms with these virtues heave,
O, with what matchless speed they leave
The multitude behind !

Then ask ye from what cause on earth
Virtues like these derive their birth ?
Derived from Heaven alone,
Full on that favour'd breast they shine,
Where Faith and Resignation join
To call the blessing down.

Such is that heart :—But while the Muse
Thy theme, O Richardson, pursues,
Her feeblèr spirits faint :
She cannot reach, and would not wrong
That subject for an Angel's song,
The Hero and the Saint.

His early turn to moralize, on the slightest occasion,
will appear from the following Verses, which he wrote
at the age of eighteen ; and which those who love to
trace the rise and progress of genius will, I think, be

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used to remark the very promising seeds of those peculiar powers which unfolded themselves in the rich maturity, at a distant period, and rendered this beautiful and sublime poem, *The Task*, the most instructive and interesting of modern compositions.

*Veres written at Bath, in 1748, on finding the
Heel of a Shoe.*

Fortune ! I thank thee : gentle Goddess ! thanks !
Not that my Muse, though bashful, shall deny,
She would have thank'd thee rather, hadst thou cast
A treasure in her way ; for neither meed
Of early breakfast to dispel the fumes,
And bowel-racking pains of emptiness,
Nor noon-tide feast, nor evening's cool repast,
Hopes she from this, presumptuous, tho' perhaps
The Cobler, leather-carving artist ! might.
Nathless she thanks thee, and accept thy boon
Whatever, not as erst the fabled Cock,
Vain-glorious fool ! unknowing what he found,
Spurn'd the rich gem thou gav'st him. Wherefore
ah !

Why not on me that favour, (worthier sure !)
Conferr'dst thou, Goddess ! Thou art blind, thou
say'st :
Enough !—Thy blindness shall excuse the deed.

Nor does my Muse no benefit exhale
From this thy scant indulgence !—even here
Hints, worthy sage philosophy, are found ;
Illustrious hints to moralize my song !
This pond'rous Heel of perforated hide
Compact, with pegs indented, many a row,
Haply (for such its massy form bespeaks)
The weighty tread of some rude peasant clown

Upbore : on this supported, oft he stretch'd
 With uncouth strides along the furrow'd glebe,
 Flatt'ning the stubborn clod, till cruel time,
 (What will not cruel time ?) on a wry step,
 Sever'd the strict cohesion : when, alas !
 He' who could erst, with even, equal pace,
 Pursue his destin'd way, with symmetry,
 And some proportion form'd, now, on one side,
 Curtail'd and maim'd, the sport of vagrant boys,
 Cursing his frail supporter, treacherous prop !
 With toilsome steps, and difficult, moves on.
 Thus fares it oft with other, than the feet
 Of humble villager—the statesman thus,
 Up the steep road, where proud ambition leads,
 Aspiring first, uninterrupted winds
 His prosp'rous way ; nor fears miscarriage foul,
 While policy prevails, and friends prove true :
 But that support soon failing, by him left,
 On whom he most depended, basely left,
 Betray'd, deserted, from his airy height
 Head-long he falls : and through the rest of life
 Drags the dull load of dissappointment on.

Of a youth, who, in a scene like Bath, could produce
 such a meditation, it may fairly be expected that he
 would,

“ In riper life, exempt from public haunt,
 Find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
 Sermons in stones, and good in every thing.”

These few words of Shakspeare have often appeared to
 me as an absolute portrait of Cowper, at that happiest
 period of his days, when he exercised and enjoyed
 his rare poetical powers in privacy, at the pleasant vil-
 lage of Weston. But before we contemplate the poet-
ical Recluse in that scene, it is the duty of his biogra-

pher to relate some painful incidents, that led to extraordinary steps, to his favourite retreat.

Though extreme diffidence, and a tendency to melancholy, seemed early to preclude Cowper from the expectation of climbing to the splendid summit of the profession he had chosen; yet, by the interest of his family, he had prospects of emolument, in a line of life, that appeared better suited to the modest nature, and to his moderate ambition.

In his thirty-first year he was nominated to the offices of reading Clerk, and Clerk of the private committees in the House of Lords. A situation then very desirable, as such an establishment might enable him to marry early in life; a measure to which he was doubly disposed by judgment and inclination. His peculiarities of his wonderful mind rendered him unable to support the ordinary duties of his new office; for the idea of reading in public proved a source of torture to his tender and apprehensive spirit. An expedient was devised to promote his interest, without wounding his feelings. Resigning his situation of reading Clerk, he was appointed Clerk of the Journals of the same House of Parliament, with a hope that his personal appearance in that assembly might not be required; but a parliamentary dispute made it necessary for him to appear at the bar of the House of Lords, and entitle himself publicly to the office.

Speaking of this important incident in a sermon which he once formed himself, of passages in his life, he expresses what he endured at the time, in remarkable words: "They whose spirits are feeble like mine, to whom a public exhibition of themselves is mortal poison, may have some idea of the horror of my situation—others can have none."

His terrors on this occasion arose to such an astonishing height, that they utterly overwhelmed his reason; for although he had endeavoured to prepare himself for his public duty, by attending closely at the office for several months, to examine the parliamentary journals, his application was rendered useless by that excess of diffidence, which made him conceive that whatever knowledge he might previously acquire, it would all forsake him at the bar of the House. This distressing apprehension increased to such a degree, as the time for his appearance approached, that when the day so anxiously dreaded arrived, he was unable to make the experiment. The very friends who called on him for the purpose of attending him to the House of Lords, acquiesced in the cruel necessity of his relinquishing the prospect of a station so severely formidable to a frame of such singular sensibility.

The conflict between the wishes of just affectionate ambition and the terrors of diffidence, so entirely overwhelmed his health and faculties, that after two learned and benevolent Divines (Mr. John Cowper, his brother, and the celebrated Mr. Martin Madan, his first cousin) had vainly endeavoured to establish a lasting tranquillity in his mind, by friendly and religious conversation, it was found necessary to remove him to St. Alban's, where he resided a considerable time, under the care of that eminent physician, Dr. Cotesworth, a scholar and a poet, who added to many accomplishments a peculiar sweetness of manners, in very advanced life, when I had the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with him.

The misfortune of mental derangement is a topic of such awful delicacy, that I consider it as the duty of a biographer rather to sink in tender silence, than to proclaim, with circumstantial and offensive temerity, the

minute particulars of a calamity to which all beings are exposed, and perhaps in proportion have received from nature those delightful but precious gifts, a heart of exquisite tenderness, and of creative energy.

This is a sight for pity to peruse,
Till she resembles, faintly, what she views;
Till sympathy contract a kindred pain,
Pierc'd with the woes, that she laments in vain
This, of all maladies that man infest,
Claims most compassion, and receives the least

But, with a soul that ever felt the sting
Of sorrow, sorrow is a sacred thing.

'Tis not, as heads that never aching suppose,
Forg'd of fancy, and a dream of woes.
Man is a harp, whose chords elude the sight,
Each yielding harmony, dispos'd aright;
'The screws revers'd (a task which, if he please
God in a moment executes with ease),
Ten thousand thousand strings at once go loose
Lost, till he tune them, all their power and use

No wounds like those a wounded spirit feels;
No cure for such, till God, who makes them, please
And thou, sad sufferer, under nameless ill,
That yields not to the touch of human skill,
Improve the kind occasion, understand
A Father's frown, and kiss the chast'ning

his awful and instructive light that Cowper teaches us to consider the calamity of which I speak, and of which he, like his illustrious Parnassus, the younger Tasso, was occasionally an affecting example. Heaven appears to have taken a lesson to mankind, to guard both virgins against pride of heart, and pride of intellect, thus suspending the affections and the talents of the most tender and sublime poets, who, in the course of their lives, and in the splendour of their powers, will be ever deservedly reckoned pre-eminent of the earth.

In December, 1763, to the following July, the pure Cowper appears to have laboured under the sufferings of morbid depression; but the medical skill of Dr. Cotton, and the cheerful, benignant friendship of that accomplished physician, gradually succeeded to the blessing of Heaven, in removing the heavy load of religious despondency which had oppressed the admirable faculties of this innocent and upright man.

His ideas of religion were changed from a gloom of terror and despair to the lustre of comfort and hope.

A better and happier view of Evangelical truth is since then arisen in his mind while he was reading the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans. Contemplation became more and more dear to his spirit: resolving to relinquish all thoughts of a secular profession, and all intercourse with the business of the world, he acquiesced in a plan of settling at Huntingdon, on the advice of his brother, who, as minister of the Gospel, and a Fellow of Bennet College, in Cambridge, resided in that University; a situation so near the place chosen for Cowper's retirement, that it

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to these affectionate brothers opportunity of frequent intercourse. I regret that all which passed between them have perished — they sometimes corresponded in verse. He was also a poet. He had engaged to a translation of Voltaire's *Henriade*; and, in the same work, requested and obtained the assistance of Miss Fanny, who translated, as he informed me, the entire Cantos of the Poem. A specimen of her original production, which appeared in a Magazine in the year 1759, will be found in the Appendix to this volume.

In June, 1765, the reviving invalid removed to his late lodging in the town of Huntingdon; but Miss Fanny soon introduced him into a family which afforded him one of the most singular and valuable friendships he ever watched an afflicted mortal in seasons of overwhelming adversity; that friend to whom the Poet claims, in the commencement of the *Task*,

And witness, dear companion of my walks,
Whose arm this twentieth winter, I perceive
Fast lock'd in my mine, with pleasure, such
Confirm'd by long experience of thy worth,
And well-tried virtues, could alone inspire;
Witness a joy that thou hast doubled long!
Thou know'st my raptures are not conjured
To serve occasions of poetic pomp,
But genuine, and art partner of them all.

These verses would be alone sufficient to a poetical reader take a lively interest in the subject to describe; but these are far from being the only instances in which the gratitude of Cowper has paid tribute to the virtues of his female companion. M

emorials of her merit will be found in these volumes, d in verse so exquisite, that it may be questioned if e most passionate love ever gave rise to poetry more nder or more sublime.

Yet, in this place, it appears proper to apprize the ader that it was not love, in the common acceptation the word, which inspired these admirable eulogies. ie attachment of Cowper to Mrs. Unwin, the Mary the Poet ! was an attachment perhaps unparalleled. heir domestic union, though not sanctioned by the mmon forms of life, was supported with perfect inno- nce, and endeared to them both, by their having uggled together through a series of sorrow. A spec- or of sensibility, who had contemplated the uncom- on tenderness of their attention to the wants and in- mities of each other in the decline of life, might have d of their singular attachment,

L'Amour n'a rien de si tendre,
Ni L'Amitié de si doux.

As a connection so extraordinary forms a striking ture in the history of the Poet, the reader will pro- bly be anxious to investigate its origin and progress. arose from the following little incident.

The countenance and deportment of Cowper, though y indicated his native shyness, had yet very singular ars of attraction. On his first appearance in one e churches at Huntingdon, he engaged the notice e respect of an amiable young man, William Caw- rne Unwin, then a student at Cambridge, who, hav- ; observed, after divine service, that the interesting anger was taking a solitary turn under a row of es, was irresistably led to share his walk, and to icit his acquaintance.

They were soon pleased with each other ; and the intelligent youth, charmed with the acquisition of such a friend, was eager to communicate the treasure to his parents, who had long resided in Huntingdon.

Mr. Unwin, the father, had, some years, been master of a free-school in the town ; but, as he advanced in life, he quitted that laborious situation, and, settling in a large convenient house, in the High-Street, contented himself with a few domestic pupils, whom he instructed in classical literature.

This worthy Divine, who was now far advanced in years, had been Lecturer to the two Churches in Huntingdon, before he obtained, from his College at Cambridge, the living of Grimston. While he lived in expectation of this preferment, he had attached himself to a young lady of lively talents, and remarkably fond of reading. This lady, who, in the process of time, and by a series of singular events, became the friend and guardian of Cowper, was the daughter of Mr. Cartthorne, a draper in Ely. She was married to Mr. Unwin on his succeeding to the preferment that he expected from his College, and settled with him on his Living of Grimston ; but not liking the situation and society of that sequestered scene, she prevailed on her husband to establish himself in the town of Huntingdon, where he was known and respected.

They had resided there many years ; and with two only children, a son and a daughter (whom I remember to have noticed at Cambridge, in the year 1784, as a youth and a damsel of countenances uncommonly pleasing), they formed a cheerful and social family, when the younger Unwin, described by Cowper as

“ A friend,
Whose worth deserves the warmest lay
That ever friendship penn’d, ”

presented to his parents the solitary stranger, on whose retirement he had benevolently intruded, and whose welfare he became more and more anxious to promote. An event highly pleasing and comfortable to Cowper soon followed this introduction: he was affectionately solicited by all the Unwins to relinquish his lonely lodging, and become a part of their family.

I am now arrived at that period in the personal history of my friend, when I am fortunately enabled to employ his now descriptive powers in recording the events and characters that particularly interested him, and in displaying the state of his mind at a remarkable season of his checkered life. The following are the most early letters of this affectionate writer with which time and chance, with the kindness of his friends and relations, have afforded me the advantage of adorning this work.

Among his juvenile intimates and correspondents he particularly regarded two gentlemen, who devoted themselves to different branches of the law, the present Lord Thurlow, and Joseph Hill, Esq. whose name appears in the second volume of Cowper's Poems, prefixed to a few verses of exquisite beauty; a brief epistle, that seems to have more of the genuine ease, spirit, and moral gaiety of Horace than any original epistle in the English language! From these two confidential associates of the Poet, in his unclouded years, I expected materials for the display of his early genius; but in the event of busy and splendid life, which bore the first of him to a mighty distance from his less ambitious fellow-student of the Temple, the private letters and verses that arose from their youthful intimacy have perished.

Mr. Hill has kindly favoured me with a very copious collection of Cowper's letters to himself, through a long period of time; and although many of them are of a nature not suited to publication, yet many others

will illustrate and embellish these volumes. The steadiness and integrity of Mr. Hill's regard for a person so much sequestered from his sight, gives him a peculiar title to stand first among those whom Cowper honoured by addressing to them his highly interesting and affectionate letters. Many of these, which I shall occasionally introduce in the parts of the narrative which they belong, may tend to confirm a truth, unpleasant to the majority of readers, that the temperate zone of moderate fortune, equally removed from high and low life, is most favourable to the permanence of friendship.

LETTER I.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq. Cook's Court, Carey-Street
London.

Huntingdon, June 24, 17

DEAR JOE,

The only recompense I can make you for your kind attention to my affairs during my illness is to tell you that, by the mercy of God, I am restored to perfect health both of mind and body. This, I believe, will give you pleasure, and I would gladly do anything from which you could receive it.

I left St. Alban's on the 17th, and arrived that day at Cambridge, spent some time there with my brother and came hither on the 22d. I have a lodging that presents continually in mind of our summer excursions: I have had many worse, and, except the size of it (which however, is sufficient for a single man), but few better. I am not quite alone, having brought a servant with me from St. Alban's, who is the very mirror of fidelity and

affection for his master. And whereas the Turkish Spy says he kept no servant, because he would not have an enemy in his house, I hired mine because I would have a friend. Men do not usually bestow these encomiums on their lackeys, nor do they usually deserve them; but I have had experience of mine, both in sickness and in health, and never saw his fellow.

The river Ouse, I forget how they spell it, is the most agreeable circumstance in this part of the world; at this town it is, I believe, as wide as the Thames at Windsor; nor does the silver Thames better deserve that epithet, nor has it more flowers upon its banks; these being attributes which, in strict truth, belong to neither. Fluellin would say they are as like as my fingers to my fingers, and there is salmon in both. It is a noble stream to bathe in, and I shall make that use of it three times a week, having introduced myself to it for the first time this morning.

I beg you will remember me to all my friends, which is a task that will cost you no great pains to execute—particularly remember me to those of your own house, and believe me

Your very affectionate,
WM. COWPER.

LETTER II.

Major COWPER, at the Park-House, near Hartford.

Huntingdon, Oct. 18, 1765.

MY DEAR MAJOR;

I have neither lost the use of my fingers nor my memory, though my unaccountable silence might incline you to suspect that I had lost both. The history of those things which have, from time to

time, prevented my scribbling, would be not
pid, but extremely voluminous ; for which re
will not make their appearance at present, 1
bly at any time hereafter. If my neglecting
you were a proof that I had never thought of
that had been really the case, five shilling
would have been much too little to give for th
such a monster ! but I am no such monster
perceive in myself the least tendency to suc
formation. You may recollect that I had bu
comfortable expectations of the accommodatio
meet with at Huntingdon. How much bette
take our lot, where it shall please Provider
it, without anxiety ! Had I chosen for myself
possible I could have fixt upon a place so ag
me in all respects. I so much dreaded the
having a new acquaintance to make, with no
commendation than that of being a perfect
that I heartily wished no creature here migh
least notice of me. Instead of which, in 3
months after my arrival, I became known to
sitable people here, and do verily think it
agreeable neighbourhood I ever saw. . .

Here are three families who have received
the utmost civility, and two in particular hav
me with as much cordiality as if their ped
mine had grown upon the same sheepskin.
these, there are three or four single men wi
temper to a hair. The town is one of the
England, the country is fine for several mile
and the roads, which are all turnpike, and
four or five different ways, are perfectly ge
year round. I mention this latter circumsta
ly because my distance from Cambridge ha
horseman of me at last, or at least is likely

other and I meet every week, by an alternate
 cation of intercourse, as Sam Johnson would ex-
 ; sometimes I get a lift in a neighbour's chaise,
 ially ride. As to my own personal condition,
 uch happier than the day is long, and sunshine
 ndle-light alike see me perfectly contented. I
 ks in abundance, as much company as I choose,
 of *comfortable leisure*, and enjoy better health, I
 han for many years past. What is there wanting
 e me happy? Nothing, if I can but be as thank-
 ought, and I trust that he who has bestowed so
 lessings upon me will give me gratitude to crown
 ll. I beg you will give my love to my dear cou-
 uria, and to every body at the Park. If Mrs.
 nd is with you, as I suspect by a passage in Lady
 h's letter to me, pray remember me to her very
 nately; and believe me, my dear friend, ever
 WM. COWPER.

LETTER III.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

October 25, 1765.

JOE,

I 'am afraid the month of October
 oved rather unfavourable to the belle assemblée
 hampton, high winds and continual rains being
 nemies to that agreeable lounge, which you and
 qually fond of. I have very cordially betaken
 to my books and my fire-side, and seldom leave
 nless merely for exercise. I have added another
 to the number of those I was acquainted with
 ou were here. Their name is Unwin—the most
 ble people imaginable, quite sociable, and as free

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on the ceremonious civility of country gentlefolks as
y I ever met with. They treat me more like a near
lation than a stranger, and their house is always open
me. The old gentleman carries me to Cambridge in
s chaise. He is a man of learning and good sense,
d as simple as Parson Adams. His wife has a very
common understanding, has read much to excellent
urpose, and is more polite than a duchess. The son,
o belongs to Cambridge, is a most amiable young
an, and the daughter quite of a piece with the rest of
e family. They see but little company, which suits
e exactly ; go when I will, I find a house full of peace
d cordiality in all its parts, and am sure to hear no
andal, but such discourse instead of it as we are all
e better for. You remember Rousseau's description
an English morning ; such are the mornings I spend
th these good people, and the evenings differ them in
thing, except that they are still more snug and quiet-
. Now I know them, I wonder that I liked Hunting-
n so well before I knew them, and am apt to think I
ould find every place disagreeable that had not a
rwin belonging to it.

This incident convinces me of the truth of an obser-
tion I have often made, that when we circumscribe
r estimate of all that is clever within the limits of our
wn acquaintance (which I at least have been always
t to do) we are guilty of a very uncharitable censur-
on the rest of the world, and of narrowness of think-
g disgraceful to ourselves. Wapping and Red-
ay contain some of the most amiable persons living
d such as one would go to Wapping and Red-
ake acquaintance with. You remember Mr. G
anza,

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear ;

Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Yours, dear Joe,
WM. COWPER.

LETTER IV.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, near Hartford.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I am much obliged to you for Pearsall's Meditations, especially as it furnishes me with an occasion of writing to you, which is all I have waited for. My friends must excuse me if I write to none but those who lay it fairly in my way to do so. The inference I am apt to draw from their silence is, that they wish *me* to be silent too.

I have great reason, my dear cousin, to be thankful to the gracious Providence that conducted me to this place. The lady in whose house I live is so excellent a person, and regards me with a friendship so truly christian, that I could almost fancy my own mother restored to life again, to compensate to me for all the friends I have lost, and all my connections broken. She has a son at Cambridge, in all respects worthy of such a mother, the most amiable young man I ever knew. His natural and acquired endowments are very considerable; and as to his virtues, I need only say that he is a christian. It ought to be a matter of daily thanksgiving to me that I am admitted into the society of such persons, and I pray God to make me, and keep me worthy of them.

Your brother Martin has been very kind to me, having wrote to me twice in a style which, though it once was irksome to me, to say the least, I know how to value. I pray God to forgive me the many light things I have both said and thought of him and his labours. Hereafter I shall consider him as a burning and a shining light, and as one of those who, having turned many to righteousness, shall shine hereafter, as the stars, for ever and ever.

So much for the state of my heart; as to my spirits, I am cheerful and happy, and having peace with God, have peace within myself. For the continuance of this blessing I trust to him who gives it, and they who trust in him shall never be confounded.

Yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

*Huntingdon, at the Rev. Mr. Unwin's, March 11,
1766.*

LETTER V.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, Hartford

April 4, 1766

MY DEAR COUSIN.

I agree with you that letters are essential to friendship; but they seem to be a natural fruit of it when they are the only intercourse that can be had. And a friendship producing no sensible effect is so like indifference, that the appearance may easily deceive even an acute discernor. I retract, however, all that I said in my last upon this subject, having reason to suspect that it proceeded from a principle of pride that I would discourage in myself upon all occasions, and felt itself hurt upon a mere suspicion.

glect. I have so much cause for humility, and so much need of it too, and every little sneaking resentment is such an enemy to it, that I hope I shall never give quarter to any thing that appears in the shape of sullenness or self-consequence hereafter. Alas! if my best friend, who laid down his life for me, were to remember all the instances in which I have neglected him, and to plead them against me in judgment, where should I hide my guilty head in the day of recompense? I will pray, therefore, for blessings upon my friends, even though they cease to be so, and upon my enemies, though they continue such. The deceitfulness of the natural heart is inconceivable: I know well that I passed upon my friends for a person at least religiously inclined, if not actually religious; and what is more wonderful, I thought myself a Christian, when I had no faith in Christ, when I saw no beauty in him, that I should desire him; in short, when I had neither faith nor love, nor any Christian grace whatever, but a thousand seeds of rebellion instead, evermore springing up in enmity against him. But blessed be God, even the God who is become my salvation. The hail of affliction, and rebuke for sin, has swept away the refuge of lies. It pleased the Almighty in great mercy to set all my misdeeds before me. At length the storm being past, a quiet and peaceful serenity of soul succeeded, such as ever attends the gifts of a lively faith in the all-sufficient atonement, and the sweet sense of mercy and pardon purchased by the blood of Christ, Thus did he break me and bind me up; thus did he wound me, and his hands have made me whole. My dear cousin, I make no apology for entertaining you with the history of my conversion, because I know you to be a Christian in the sterling import of the appellation. This is, however, but a summary account of the

matter, neither would a letter contain the particulars of it. If we ever meet again I will relate them to you by word of mouth; they will serve for the subject of a conference next; where, I doubt not, I shall record them with a gratitude better suited to

Yours, my dear cousin, affectionately

WM. C

LETTER VI.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House,

Am

MY DEAR COUSIN,

As in matters unattainable by reason, and unrevealed in the Scripture, it is impossible to argue at all; so in matters concerning reason, reason can only give a probable guess, and though it has made no explicit discovery, it is, though not impossible to argue at all, yet impossible to arrive at a certain conclusion. This seems to me to be the point in question—Reason is able to form probable conjectures concerning the possibilities of things, knowing each other in a future state, and thus has, here and there, favoured us with an intimation that looks at least like a slight intimation of a cause, though a conjecture can never amount to a proof; a slight intimation cannot be construed into a positive assertion, therefore I think we can never come to a solid conclusion upon the subject. We may reason about the plausibility of our conjectures, we may discuss, with great industry, and shrewd argument, those passages in the Scripture which favour the opinion; but still no certain me-

been afforded us, no certain end can be attained ; and after all that can be said, it will still be doubtful whether we shall know each other or not.

As to the arguments founded upon human reason only, it would be easy to muster up a much greater number on the affirmative side of the question than it would be worth my while to write yours to read. Let us see, therefore, what the Scripture says, or seems to say, towards the proof of it ; and of this kind of argument also I shall insert but a few of those which seem to me to be the fairest and clearest for the purpose : for, after all, a disputant on either side of this question is in danger of that censure of our blessed Lord's, " Ye do err, not knowing the Scripture, nor the power of God."

As to parables, I know it has been said, in the dispute concerning the intermediate state, that they are not argumentative ; but this having been controverted by very wise and good men, and the parable of Dives and Lazarus having been used by such, to prove an intermediate state, I see not why it may not be as fairly used for the proof of any other matter, which it seems fairly to imply. In this parable we see that Dives is represented as knowing Lazarus, and Abraham as knowing them both ; and the discourse between them is entirely concerning their respective characters and circumstances upon earth. Here, therefore, our Saviour seems to countenance the notion of a mutual knowledge and recollection, and if a soul that has perished shall know the soul that is saved, surely the heirs of salvation shall know and recollect each other.

In the first Epistle to the Thesalonians, the 2d chapter, and 19th verse, St. Paul says, " What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing ? Are not even ye in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at his coming ? For we are our glory and our joy."

As to the hope which the Apostle has formed concerning them, he himself refers to the accomplishment of it to the coming of Christ, meaning that they should receive the recompense of his labours in the end: his joy and glory he refers likewise to the same period, both which would result from the sight of sinners redeemed by the blessing of God upon his administration, when he should present them before the great Judge, and say in the words of a greater than himself, "Lo! I, and the children whom thou hast given me." This seems to imply that the Apostle should know the converts, and the converts the Apostle, at least at the day of judgment; and if then, why not afterwards?

See also the 4th chapter of that Epistle, 13, 14, 16, which I have not room to transcribe. Here the Apostle comforts them under their affliction, for their deceased brethren, exhorting them "Not to sorrow as without hope:" and what is the hope by which he teaches them to support their spirits? Even this, "That them which sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him." In other words, and by a fair paraphrase surely, telling them they are only taken from them for a season, and they should receive them at the resurrection.

If you can take off the force of these texts, my cousin, you will go a great way towards shaking my opinion; if not, I think they must go a great way towards shaking yours.

The reason why I did not send you my opinion Pearson was, because I had not then read him; I have read him since, and like him much, especially the latter part of him; but you have whetted my curiosity to see the last letter by tearing it out. Unless you give me a good reason why I should not see it, I will inquire for the book the next time I go to Cambridge.

Perhaps I may be partial to Hervey for the sake of his other writings, but I cannot give Pearshall the preference to him, for I think him one of the most scriptural writers in the world.

Yours,
WM. COWPER.

LETTER VII.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, Hartford.

April 18, 1766.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Having gone as far as I thought needful to justify the opinion of our meeting and knowing each other hereafter, I find, upon reflection, that I have done but half my business, and that one of the questions you proposed remains entirely unconsidered, viz. "Whether the things of our present state will not be of too low and mean a nature to engage our thoughts, or make a part of our communications in Heaven?"

The common and ordinary occurrences of life no doubt, and even the ties of kindred, and all temporal interests, will be entirely discarded from amongst that happy society, and possibly even the remembrance of them done away. But it does not, therefore, follow that our spiritual concerns, even in this life, will be forgotten; neither do I think that they can ever appear trifling to us in any the most distant period of eternity. God, as you say in reference to the Scripture, will be all in all. But does not that expression mean, that being admitted to so near an approach to our heavenly Father and Redeemer, our whole nature, the soul, and all its faculties, will be employed in praising and adoring him? Doubtless, however, this will be the

case ; and if so, will it not furnish out a glorious theme of thanksgiving to recollect " The rock whence we were hewn, and the hole of the pit whence we were digged ? " To recollect the time when our faith, which, under the tuition and nurture of the Holy Spirit, has produced such a plentiful harvest of immortal bliss, was as a grain of mustard-seed, small in itself, promising but little fruit, and producing less ? To recollect the various attempts that were made upon it by the world, the flesh, and the devil, and its various triumphs over all, by the assistance of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ ? At present, whatever our convictions may be of the sinfulness and corruption of our nature, we can make but a very imperfect estimate either of our weakness or our guilt. Then, no doubt, we shall understand the full value of the wonderful salvation wrought out for us : and it seems reasonable to suppose, that in order to form a just idea of our redemption, we shall be able to form a just one of the danger we have escaped ; when we know how weak and frail we were, surely we shall be more able to render due praise and honour to his strength who fought for us ; when we know completely the hatefulness of sin in the sight of God, and how deeply we were tainted by it, we shall know how to value the blood by which we are cleansed as we ought. The twenty-four Elders in the 5th of the Revelations, give glory to God for their redemption, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. This surely implies a retrospect to their respective conditions upon earth, and that each remembered out of what particular kindred and nation he had been redeemed ; and if so, then surely the minutest circumstance of their redemption did not escape their memory. They who triumph over the Beast in the 15th chapter, sing the Song of Moses, the servant of God : and what was that Song ? A sublime record of Israel's deliverance, and

the destruction of her enemies in the Red-Sea, typical no doubt of the Song which the redeemed in Sion shall sing to celebrate their own salvation, and the defeat of their spiritual enemies. This again implies a recollection of the dangers they had before encountered, and the supplies of strength and ardour they had in every emergency received from the great Deliverer out of all. These quotations do not indeed prove that their warfare upon earth includes a part of their converse with each other, but they prove that it is a theme not unworthy to be heard even before the throne of God, and therefore it cannot be unfit for reciprocal communication.

But you doubt whether there is *any* communication between the blessed at all, neither do I recollect any Scripture that proves it, or bears any relation to the subject. But reason seems to require it so peremptorily, that a society without social intercourse seems to be a solecism, and a contradiction in terms, and the inhabitants of those regions are called, you know, in Scripture, an innumerable *company*, and an *assembly*, which seems to convey the idea of society as clearly as the word itself. Human testimony weighs but little in matters of this sort; but let it have all the weight it can: I know no greater names in divinity than Watts and Doddridge; they were both of this opinion, and I send you the words of the latter:

“Our *companions in glory* may probably assist us by their wise and good observations when we come to make the *Providence of God*, here upon earth, under the guidance and directions of our Lord Jesus Christ, the *subject of our mutual converse*.”

Thus, my dear cousin, I have spread out my reasons before you for an opinion which, whether admitted or denied, affects not the state or interest of our soul:—

May our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, conduct us into his own Jerusalem, where there shall be no night, neither any darkness at all, where we shall be free even from innocent error, and perfect in the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Yours faithfully,

WM. COWPER.

LETTER VIII.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, Hartford.

Huntingdon, Sept. 3, 1766

MY DEAR COUSIN,

It is reckoned, you know, a great achievement to silence an opponent in disputation and your silence was of so long continuance, that might well begin to please myself with the apprehension of having accomplished so arduous a matter. To be serious, however, I am not sorry that what I have said concerning our knowledge of each other in a future state, has a little inclined you to the affirmative: For though the redeemed of the Lord shall be sure of being as happy in that state as infinite power, employed by infinite goodness, can make them, and therefore it may seem immaterial whether we shall or shall not recollect each other hereafter; yet our present happiness least is a little interested in the question. A parent, friend, a wife, must needs, I think, feel a little headache at the thought of an eternal separation from the objects of her regard: and not to know them when she meets them in another life, or never to meet them at all, amounts, though not altogether, yet nearly to the same thing. Remember them, I think, she needs must. To hear that they are happy will indeed be no small

addition to her own felicity ; but to see them so will surely be a greater. Thus, at least, it appears to our present human apprehension ; consequently, therefore, to think that when we leave them, we lose them for ever, that we must remain eternally ignorant whether they that were flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone, partake with us of celestial glory, or are disinherited of their heavenly portion, must shed a dismal gloom over all our present connections. For my own part, this life is such a momentary thing, and all its interests have so shrunk in my estimation, since, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, I became attentive to the things of another, that, like a worm in the bud of all my friendships and affections, this very thought would eat out the heart of them all, had I a thousand : and were their date to terminate with this life, I think, I should have no inclination to cultivate and improve such a fugitive business. Yet friendship is necessary to our happiness here, and built upon Christian principles, upon which only it can stand, is a thing even of religious sanction : for what is that love which the Holy Spirit, speaking by St. John, so much inculcates, but friendship ? The only love which deserves the name ; a love which can toil, and watch, and deny itself, and go to death for its brother. Worldly friendships are a poor weed compared with this, and even this union of spirit, in the bond of peace, would suffer in my mind at least, could I think it were only coeval with our earthly mansions. It may possibly argue great weakness in me, in this instance, to stand so much in need of future hopes to support me in the discharge of present duty. But so it is : I am far, I know, very far, from being perfect in Christian love, or any other divine attainment, and am therefore unwilling to forego whatever may help me in my progress.

You are so kind as to inquire after my health, which reason I must tell you, what otherwise would be worth mentioning, that I have lately been just indisposed to convince me that not only human general, but mine in particular, hangs by a thread. I am stout enough in appearance, yet illness demolishes me. I have had a severe shake the building is not so firm as it was. But I believe for it with all my heart. If the inner man strengthened day by day, as I hope, under the influencing influences of the Holy Ghost, it will be no how soon the outward is dissolved. He who has raised me from the dead, in a literal manner has given me the grace, I trust, to be ready at the first notice, to surrender up to him that life which he twice received from him. Whether I live or die, it may be to his glory, and it must be to my loss. I thank God that I have those among my kindred to whom I can write without reserve of comments upon this subject, as I do to you. A letter on any other subject is more insipid to me than a task was when a school-boy; and I say not this for glory, God forbid! but to show you what thank I owe to the mighty, whose name I am unworthy to mention, who has done for me, the chief of sinners. Once he was a sinner to me; and his service, O what a weariness! Now I can say I love him and his holy name, and I am never so happy as when I speak of his mercies to me.

Yours, dear cousin,

WM. COWPER

LETTER IX.

Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, Harford.
Huntingdon, Oct. 20, 1766.

DEAR COUSIN,

I am very sorry for poor
les's illness, and hope you will soon have cause to
: God for his complete recovery. We have an
mical fever in this country likewise, which leaves
d it a continual sighing, almost to suffocation; not
have seen any instance of it, for blessed be God our
y have hitherto escaped it, but such was the ac-
I heard of it this morning.

m obliged to you for the interest you take in my
re, and for your inquiring so particularly after the
er in which my time passes here. As to amuse-
s, I mean what the world calls such, we have none:
place indeed swarms with them, and cards and
ng are the professed business of almost all the gen-
habitants of Huntingdon. We refuse to take part
em, or to be accessaries to this way of murdering
time, and by so doing have acquired the name of
odists. Having told you how we *do not* spend our
I will next say how we do. We breakfast com-
y between eight and nine; till eleven we read ei-
the Scripture, or the sermons of some faithful
cher of these holy mysteries: at eleven we attend
e service, which is performed here twice every
and from twelve to three we separate, and amuse
selves as we please. During that interval, I either
in my own apartment, or walk, or ride, or work
e garden. We seldom sit an hour after dinner,
if the weather permits, adjourn to the garden,
e, with Mrs. Unwin and her son, I have generally

the pleasure of religious conversation till tea-time. if it rains, or is too windy for walking, we either converse within doors, or sing some hymns of Martin's collection and, by the help of Mrs. Unwin's harpsichord, make up a tolerable concert, in which our hearts, I hope, are the best and most musical performers. After tea we sally forth to walk in good earnest. Mrs. Unwin is a good walker, and we have generally travelled about four miles before we see home again. When the days are short, we make this excursion in the former part of the day, between church-time and dinner. At night we read and converse as before, till supper, and commonly finish the evening either with hymns or a sermon and last of all, the family are called to prayers. I need not tell *you* that such a life as this is consistent with the utmost cheerfulness, accordingly we are all happy, and dwell together in unity as brethren. Mrs. Unwin has almost a maternal affection for me, and I have something very like a filial one for her, and her son and I are brothers, Blessed be the God of our salvation for such companions, and for such a life; above all, for an heart to like it.

I have had many anxious thoughts about taking orders, and I believe every new convert is apt to think himself called upon for that purpose; but it has pleased God, by means which there is no need to particularize, to give me full satisfaction as to the propriety of declining it: indeed, they who have the least idea of what I have suffered from the dread of public exhibitions, will readily excuse my never attempting them hereafter. In the mean time, if it please the Almighty, I may be an instrument of turning many to the truth in a private way, and hope that my endeavours in this way have not

entirely unsuccessful. Had I the zeal of Moses, I should want an Aaron to be my spokesman.

Yours ever, my dear cousin,
WM. COWPER.

LETTER X.

Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, Hartford.

March 11, 1767.

DEAR COUSIN,

To find those whom I love clearly and strongly persuaded of Evangelical truth, gives me pleasure superior to any that this world can afford.

Judge then whether your letter, in which the bond substance of a saving faith is so evidently set forth, could meet with a lukewarm reception at my hands, or be entertained with indifference! Would you not be the true reason of my long silence? Conscious that my religious principles are generally excepted against, and that the conduct they produce, wherever they are heartily maintained, is still more the object of approbation than those principles themselves; and remembering that I had made both the one and the other known to you, without having any clear assurance that our faith in Jesus was of the same stamp and character, I could not help thinking it possible that you might disapprove both my sentiments and practice; you might think the one unsupported by Scripture, the other whimsical and unnecessarily strict and rigorous, and, consequently, would be rather pleased with suspension of a correspondence, which a different way of thinking upon so momentous a subject as that which I wrote upon, was likely to render tedious and irksome to you.

I have told you the truth from my heart: forgive these injurious suspicions, and never imagine that I shall hear from you upon this delightful theme without a rejoicing, or without prayer to God to prosper you in the way of his truth, his sanctifying and saving truth. The book you mention lies now upon my table. Marshal is an acquaintance of mine; I have both read him and heard him read with pleasure and edification. The doctrines he maintains are, under the influence of the Spirit of Christ, the very life of my soul, and the soul of all my happiness; that Jesus is a *present* Saviour from the guilt of sin by his most precious blood, and from the power of it by his Spirit; that corrupt and wretched in ourselves, in him, and in *him only*, we are complete; that being united to Jesus by a lively faith, we have a solid and eternal interest in his obedience and sufferings, to justify us before the face of our heavenly Father; and that all this inestimable treasure, the earnest of which is in grace, and its consummation in glory, is given, freely *given* to us of God; in short, that he hath opened the kingdom of Heaven to *all believers*. These are the truths which, by the grace of God, shall ever be dearer to me than life itself; shall ever be placed next my heart as the throne whereon the Saviour himself shall sit, to sway all its motions, and reduce that world of iniquity and rebellion to a state of filial and affectionate obedience to the will of the Most Holy.

These, my dear cousin, are the truths to which by nature we are enemies—they debase the sinner, and exalt the Saviour to a degree which the pride of our hearts (till almighty grace subdues them) is determined never to allow. May the Almighty reveal his Son in our hearts, continually more and more, and teach us to increase in love towards him continually, for having *given* us the unspeakable riches of Christ.

Yours faithfully,

WM. COWPER.

LETTER XI

Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, Hartford.

DEAR COUSIN,

March 14, 1767.

I just add a line by way of Post-
 pt to my last, to apprize you of the arrival of a
 y dear friend of mine at the Park on Friday next,
 son of Mr. Unwin, whom I have desired to call on
 in his way from London to Huntingdon. If you
 w him as well as I do, you would love him as much.
 I leave the young man to speak for himself, which
 s very able to do. He is ready possessed of an an-
 r to every question you can possibly ask concerning
 and knows my *whole story*, from first to last. I
 : you this previous notice, because I know you are
 fond of strange faces, and because I thought it would,
 some degree, save him the pain of announcing him-

am become a great florist and shrub doctor. If the
 or can make up a small packet of seeds that will
 be a figure in a garden, where we have little else
 des jessamine and honeysuckle; such a packet I
 in as may be put into one's fob, I will promise to
 : great care of them, as I ought to value natives of
 Park. They must not be such, however, as re-
 e great skill in the management, for at present I
 e no skill to spare.

I think Marshal one of the best writers, and the
 t spiritual expositor of Scripture, I ever read. I
 ire the strength of his argument, and the clearness
 is reasoning upon those parts of our most holy Reli-
 i which are generally least understood (even by
 .Christians) as master-pieces of the kind. His
 ion upon the union of the soul with Christ is an in-

stance of what I mean, in which he has spoken of a mysterious truth with admirable perspicuity, and great good sense, making it all the while subserve to his main purport, of proving holiness to be the end and effect of faith.

I subjoin thus much upon that author, because tho' you desire my opinion of him, I remember that in last I rather left you to find it out by inference than pressed it as I ought to have done. I never met ~~with~~ a man who understood the plan of salvation better, ~~or~~ was more happy in explaining it.

LETTER XII.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, Hartford.
Huntingdon, April 3, 1767.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

You sent my friend Unwin home to us charmed with your kind reception of him, and with every thing he saw at the Park. Shall I once more give you a peep into my vile and deceitful Heart? What motive do you think lay at the bottom of my conduct when I desired him to call upon you? I did not suspect at first that pride and vain-glory had any share in it, but quickly after I had recommended the visit to him I discovered in that fruitful soil the very root of the matter. You know I am a stranger here; all such are suspected characters, unless they bring their credentials with them. To this moment, I believe, it is matter of speculation in the place whence I came, and to whom I belong.

Though my friend, you may suppose, before I was admitted an intimate here, was satisfied that I was no a mere vagabond, and has since that time receive

convincing proofs of my *sponsibility*, yet I could not resist the opportunity of furnishing him with ocular demonstration of it, by introducing him to one of my splendid connections; that when he hears me call my *fellow Cowper*, which has happened heretofore, he may be able, upon unquestionable evidence, to assert my gentlemanhood, and relieve me from the weight of that opprobrious appellation. Oh Pride, Pride! it creeps with the subtlety of a serpent, and seems to direct though it crawls upon the earth. How will it entangle and twine itself about to get from under the feet of the Christian, which it is the glory of our Christian calling to bear with patience and good will. They who are at the heart of a stranger, and you especially are of a compassionate temper, will be more perhaps to excuse me in this instance than I can excuse myself. But in good truth it was abominable pride of heart, indignation and vanity, and deserves no better name. How should such a creature be admitted into those pure and sinless mansions where none shall enter that defileth, did not the Blood of Christ, applied by the hand of Faith, take away the stain of sin, and leave no spot or stain behind it? Oh continual need have I of an Almighty, all-sufficient Saviour? I am glad you are acquainted so *partially* with *all* the circumstances of my story, for that your secrecy and discretion may be trusted with any thing. A thread of mercy run through the intricate maze of those afflictive providences, mysterious to myself at the time, and which must remain so to all who will not see what was the design of them: at the judgment seat of Christ all shall be laid open. How is the rod of iron changed into a sceptre of love!

Thank you for the seeds; I have committed some

of each sort to the ground, whence they will spring up like so many mementos to remind me friends at the Park.

LETTER XIII.

To Mrs. COWPER, at the Park-House, Huntingdon, July 1:

MY DEAR COUSIN,

The newspaper has told truth. Poor Mr. Unwin, being flung from his horse as he was going to his church on Sunday morning, received a dreadful fracture on the back part of his skull under which he languished till Thursday evening then died. This awful dispensation has left an impression on our spirits which will not presently be forgotten. He died in a poor cottage, to which he was carried immediately after his fall, about a mile from home; his body could not be brought to his house till the next day, as the weather was gone to him who gave it. May it be a lesson to watch, since we know not the day nor hour when the Lord cometh.

The effect of it upon my circumstances will be a change of the place of my abode: for I shall, with God's leave, continue with Mrs. Unwin, whose attachment to me has always been that of a mother. We know not yet where we shall settle, but we are persuaded that the Lord, whom we seek, will go before us and prepare a rest for us. We have employed our friends, Mr. Haweis, Dr. Conyers, of Helmsley, in Yorkshire, and Mr. Newton of Olney, to look out for us, but we are entirely ignorant under which of the three we shall settle, or whether under either. I have written

aunt Madan to desire Martin to assist us with his inquiries. It is probable we shall stay here till Michaelmas.

LETTER XIV.
To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

July 16, 1767.

DEAR JOE,

Your wishes that the newspaper may have misinformed you are vain. Mr. Unwin is dead, and died in the manner there mentioned. At nine o'clock on Sunday morning he was in perfect health, and as likely to live twenty years as either of us, and before ten was stretched speechless and senseless upon a flock bed in a poor cottage, where (it being impossible to remove him) he died on Thursday evening. I heard his dying groans, the effect of a great agony, for he was a strong man, and much convulsed in his last moments. The few short intervals of sense that were indulged him, he spent in earnest prayer, and in expressions of a firm trust and confidence in the only Saviour. To that strong hold we must all resort at last, if we would have hope in our death; when every other refuge fails, we are glad to fly to the only shelter, to which we can repair to any purpose; and happy is it for us when the false ground we have chosen for ourselves being broken under us, we find ourselves obliged to have recourse to the Rock which can never be shaken—when this is our lot, we receive great and undeserved mercy.

Our society will not break up, but we shall settle in some other place, where is at present unknown.

Yours,

F 2

WM. COWPER.

These tender and confidential letters describe, in clearest light, the singularly peaceful and devout life of this amiable writer during his residence at Huntingdon and the melancholy accident which occasioned his removal to a distant county. Time and chance now introduced to the notice of Cowper the zealous and venerable friend, who became his intimate associate for many years, after having advised and assisted him in the important concern of fixing his future residence. Mr. Newton, then Curate of Olney, in Buckinghamshire, had been requested, by the late Dr. Conyers (who, in taking a degree in Divinity at Cambridge, had formed a friendship with young Mr. Unwin, and learned from him the religious character of his mother), to seize an opportunity, as he was passing through Huntingdon, of making a visit to an exemplary lady. This visit (so important in its consequences to the destiny of Cowper!) happened to take place within a few days after the calamitous death of Mr. Unwin. As a change of scene appeared desirable both to Mrs. Unwin and to the interesting Recluse, whom she had generously requested to continue under her care, Mr. Newton offered to assist them in removing to the pleasant and picturesque county in which he resided. They were willing to enter into the flock of a benevolent and animated pastor, whose religious ideas were so much in harmony with their own. He engaged for them a house at Olney, where they arrived on the 14th of October, 1767.

The time of Cowper, in his new situation, seems to have been chiefly devoted to religious contemplation, to social prayer, and to active charity. To this first of Christian virtues his heart was eminently inclined, and Providence very graciously enabled him to exercise and enjoy it to an extent far superior to what his own scanty fortune appeared to allow. He was very

far from inheriting opulence on the death of his father, in 1756; and the singular cast of his own mind was such, that nature seemed to have rendered it impossible for him either to covet or to acquire riches. His perfect exemption from worldly passions is forcibly displayed in the two following letters.

LETTER XV.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

Olney, June 16, 1768.

DEAR JOE,

I thank you for so full an answer to so empty an epistle. If Olney furnished any thing for your amusement you should have it in return, but occurrences here are as scarce as cucumbers at Christmas.

I visited St. Alban's about a fortnight since in person, and I visit it every day in thought. The recollection of what passed there, and the consequences that followed it, fill my mind continually, and make the circumstances of a poor transient half-spent life so insipid and unaffecting, that I have no heart to think or write much about them. Whether the nation are worshipping Mr. Wilkes, or any other idol, is of little moment to one who hopes and believes that he shall shortly stand in the presence of the great and blessed God. I thank him that he has given me such a deep impressed persuasion of this awful truth as a thousand worlds would not purchase from me. It gives a relish to every blessing, and makes every trouble light. Affectionately yours.

W. C.

LETTER XVI.
To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

DEAR JOE,

Sir Thomas crosses the Alp Cowper, for that is his title at Olney, prefers to any other spot of earth in the world. He serving this difference of temper in different cried out, a good many years ago, in the true poetry, "How much one man differs from a This does not seem a very sublime exclamationish, but I remember we were taught to admire the original.

My dear friend, I am obliged to you for your opinion; but being long accustomed to retirement was always fond of, I am now more than ever to revisit those noisy and crowded scenes which I loved, and which I now abhor. I remember all the friendship I ever professed, which is a I ever entertained for any man. But the strange uncommon incidents of my life have given an entire turn to my whole character and conduct, and made me incapable of receiving pleasure from the employments and amusements of which I could partake in former days.

I love you and yours; I thank you for your remembrance of me, and shall not cease to be your

Affectionate friend and servant
WM. COWPER

His retirement was ennobled by many private beneficence, and his exemplary virtue was the opulent sometimes delighted to make his

moner. In his sequestered life at Olney, he ministered abundantly to the wants of the poor, from a fund, with which he was supplied by that model of extensive and unostentatious philanthropy, the late John Thornton, Esq. whose name he has immortalized in his Poem on Charity, still honouring his memory by an additional tribute to his virtues, in the following unpublished Poem, written immediately on his decease, in the year 1790.

Poets attempt the noblest task they can,
Praising the author of all good in man ;
And next commemorating worthies lost,
The dead, in whom that good abounded most.

Thee therefore of commercial fame, but more
Fam'd for thy probity, from shore to shore ;
Thee, Thornton, worthy in some page to shine
As honest, and more eloquent than mine,
I mourn : or since thrice happy thou must be,
The world, no longer thy abode, not thee ;
Thee to deplore were grief mispent indeed ;
It were to weep, that goodness has its meed,
That there is bliss prepared in yonder sky,
And glory for the virtuous, when they die.

What pleasure can the miser's fondled hoard,
Or spendthrift's prodigal excess afford,
Sweet, as the privilege of healing woe
Suffer'd by virtue, combating below ?
That privilege was thine ; Heaven gave thee means
To illumine with delight the saddest scenes,
Till thy appearance chas'd the gloom, forlorn
As midnight, and despairing of a morn.
Thou had'st an industry in doing good,
Restless as his, who toils and sweats for food.

Av'rice in thee was the desire of wealth
 By rust unperishable, or by stealth.
 And if the genuine worth of gold depend
 On application to its noblest end,
 Thine had a value in the scales of Heaven,
 Surpassing all, that mine or mint had given :
 And though God made thee of a nature prone
 To distribution, boundless of thy own,
 And still, by motives of religious force,
 Impell'd thee more to that heroic course ;
 Yet was thy liberality discreet ;
 Nice in its choice, and of a temp'rate heat ;
 And though in act unwearied, secret still,
 As, in some solitude, the summer rill
 Refreshes, where it winds, the faded green,
 And cheers the drooping flowers, unheard, un-

Such was thy Charity ; no sudden start,
 After long sleep of passion in the heart,
 But stedfast principle, and in its kind
 Of close alliance with th' eternal mind :
 Trac'd easily to its source above,
 To him, whose works bespeak his nature, lo
 Thy bounties all were Christian, and I make
 This record of thee for the Gospel's sake ;
 That the incredulous themselves may see
 Its use and power exemplified in thee.

This simple and sublime eulogy was perfectly
 ed ; and among the happiest actions of this true
 ral man, we may reckon his furnishing to a c
 so reserved, and so retired as Cowper, the
 his enjoying the gratification of active and co
 fidence ; a gratification, in which the sequeste
 had nobly indulged himself before his acquainta
 Mr. Newton afforded him an opportunity of b

cerned in distributing the private, yet extensive bounty of an opulent and exemplary merchant.

Cowper, before he quitted St. Alban's assumed the charge of a necessitous child ; to extricate him from the perils of being educated by very profligate parents, he put him to school at Huntingdon, removed him on his own removal to Olney, and finally settled him as an apprentice in St. Alban's.

The warm, benevolent, and cheerful enthusiasm of Mr. Newton induced his friend Cowper to participate so abundantly in his devout occupation, that Poet's time and thoughts were more and more engrossed, by religious pursuits. He wrote many hymns, and occasionally directed the prayers of the poor. Where the nerves are tender, and the imagination tremblingly alive, any little excess, in the exercise of the purest piety, may be attended with such perils to corporeal and mental health, as men of a more firm and hardy fibre would be far from apprehending. Perhaps the life that Cowper led, on his settling in Olney, had a tendency to increase the morbid propensity of his frame, though it was a life of admirable sanctity.

Absorbed as he was in devotion, he forgot not his distant friends, and particularly his amiable relation and correspondent of the Park-House, near Hartford. The following letter to that lady has no date, but it was probably written soon after his establishment at Olney. The remarkable memento in the postscript was undoubtedly introduced to counteract an idle rumour, arising from the circumstance of his having settled himself under the roof of a female friend, whose age, and whose virtues, he considered as sufficient securities to ensure her reputation.

LETTER XVII.
To Mrs. COWPER.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I have not been behind-reproaching myself with neglect, but desire to share the shame to myself for my unprofitableness in this, as in all other respects. I take the next opportunity however of thanking you for yours assuring you that instead of being surprized at your silence, I rather wonder that you, or any of my friends, have any room left for so careless and negligent respondents in your memories. I am obliged to you for the intelligence you send me of my kindred, and to hear of their welfare. He who settles the place of our habitation has at length cast our lot at a distance from each other ; but I do not therefore cease their former kindness, to me, or cease to be interested in their well-being. You live in the centre of a family which I know you do not delight in. Happy are you, my dear friend, being able to discern the insufficiency of the world to afford to fill and satisfy the desires of an immortal soul. That God who created us for the enjoyment of himself, has determined, in mercy, that it shall be here, in order that the blessed result of all our inquiries after happiness in the creature may be a warm and a close attachment to our true interest, in communion and communion with him, through the mediation of a dear Redeemer. I bless his goodness and grace that I have any reason to hope I am not a taker with you in the desire after better things than to be found in a world polluted with sin, and devoted to destruction. May he enable us both to consider our present life in its only true light, as an opportunity put into our hands to glorify him among men by a conduct suited to his word and will. I am

ably defective in this holy and blessed art ; but I hope there is at the bottom of all my sinful infirmities, a sincere desire, to live just so long as I may be enabled, in some poor measure, to answer the end of my existence in this respect, and then to obey the summons, and attend him in a world where they who are his servants here shall pay him an un sinful obedience for ever. Your dear mother is too good to me, and puts a more charitable construction upon my silence than the fact will warrant. I am not better employed than I should be in corresponding with her. I have that within which hinders me wretchedly in every thing that I ought to do, but is prone to trifle, and let time and every good thing run to waste. I hope, however, to write to her soon.

My love and best wishes attend Mr. Cowper, and all that inquire after me. May God be with you, to bless you, and do you good by all his dispensations : don't forget me when you are speaking to our best Friend before his mercy-seat.

Yours ever,
W. COWPER.

N. B. I am not married.

In the year 1769 the Lady to whom the preceding letters are addressed was involved in domestic affliction ; and the following, which the Poet wrote to her on the occasion, is so full of genuine piety and true pathos, that it would be an injury to his memory to suppress it.

LETTER XVIII.

Olney, Aug. 13, 1769.

To Mrs. COWPER.

DEAR COUSIN,

A letter from your brother Frederick brought me yesterday the most afflicting intel-

ligence that has reached me these many years to God to comfort you, and to enable you this heavy stroke with that resignation to his will he gives to none but his own children. He and happy is your lot, my dear friend, beyond most of the greater part of mankind, that what it is to draw near to God in prayer, acquainted with a Throne of Grace! You have in the infinite love of a dear Redeemer, withheld from millions; and the promises which are yea and amen in Jesus, are sufficient to answer all your necessities, and to sweeten the bit which your heavenly Father will ever put in your hand. May he now give you liberty to drink of the wells of salvation, till you are filled with consolation and peace in the midst of trouble. He has said, 'I will pass through the fire, I will be with thee, through the floods, they shall not overflow till I have need of such a word as this, and he knows the need of it, and the time of necessity is the time when he will be sure to appear in behalf of those who I bear you and yours upon my heart before God day and day, for I never expect to hear of a distress which shall call upon me with a louder voice to pray than the sufferer. I know the Lord hears me for myself, and as sinful as I am, and believe, and am sure he will hear me for you also. He is the friend of the fatherless, and the father of the fatherless, even of the holy habitation; in all our afflictions he is afflicted with us, and chastens us in mercy. Surely he will sanctify you, and give you great and everlasting consolation, it makes the world appear like dust and vanity, as it truly is, and open to your view the way to a better country, where there shall be no more sorrow nor pain, but God shall wipe

tears from your eyes for ever. Oh that comfortable word! "I have chosen thee in the furnaces of affliction;" so that our very sorrows are evidences of our calling, and he chastens us because we are his children.

My dear cousin, I commit you to the word of his grace, and to the comforts of his Holy Spirit. Your life is needful for your family; may God in mercy to them prolong it, and may he preserve you from the dangerous effects which a stroke like this might have upon a frame so tender as yours. I grieve with you—I pray for you—could I do more I would, but God must comfort you.

Yours, in our dear Lord Jesus,
W. COWPER.

In the following year the tender feelings of Cowper were called forth by family affliction, that pressed more immediately on himself; he was hurried to Cambridge by the dangerous illness of his brother, then residing as a Fellow in Bennet College. An affection truly fraternal had ever subsisted between the brothers, and the reader will recollect what the Poet has said in one of his letters concerning their social intercourse while he resided at Huntingdon.

In the two first years of his residence at Olney, he had been repeatedly visited by Mr. John Cowper: and how cordially he returned his kindness and his attention the following letter will testify, which was probably written in the chamber of the invalid, whom the writer so fervently wished to restore.

LETTER XIX.
To Mrs. COWPER.*March 5, 1770.*

My brother continues much as he was. His case is a very dangerous one ; an imposthume of the liver, attended by an asthma and dropsy. The Physician has little hope of his recovery : I might say none at all, only being a friend, he does not formally give him over by ceasing to visit him, lest it should sink his spirits. For my own part I have no expectation of his recovery, except by a signal a interposition of Providence in answer to prayer. His case is clearly out of the reach of medicine, but I have seen many a sickness healed, where the danger has been equally threatening, by the only Physician of value. I doubt not he will have an interest in your prayers, as he has in the prayers of many. May the Lord incline his ear, and give an answer of peace. I know it is good to be afflicted. I trust that you have found it so, and that under the teaching of God's own Spirit we shall both be purified.—It is the desire of my soul to seek a better country, where God shall wipe away all tears from the eyes of his people, and where, looking back upon the ways by which he has led us, we shall be filled with everlasting wonder, love and praise. I must add no more.

Yours ever,

W. COWPER.

The sickness and death of his learned, pious, and affectionate brother, made a very strong impression on the tender heart and mind of Cowper—an impression so strong that it induced him to write a narrative of

the remarkable circumstances which occurred at the time. He sent a copy of this narrative to Mr. Newton. The paper is curious in every point of view, and so likely to awaken sentiments of piety in minds where it may be most desirable to have them awakened, that Mr. Newton has thought it his duty to print it.

Here it is incumbent on me to introduce a brief account of the interesting person whom the Poet regarded so tenderly. John Cowper was born in 1737: being designed for the Church, he was privately educated by a Clergyman, and became eminent for the extent and variety of his erudition in the University of Cambridge. His conduct and sentiments, as a Minister of the Gospel, are copiously displayed by his brother, in recording the remarkable close of his life. Bennet College, of which he was a Fellow, was his usual residence, and it became the scene of his death, on the 20th of March, 1770. Fraternal affection has executed a perfectly just and graceful description of his character, both in prose and verse. I transcribe both, as highly honourable to these exemplary brethren, who may indeed be said to have dwelt together in unity.

"He was a man," says the Poet in speaking of his deceased brother, "of a most candid and ingenuous spirit; his temper remarkably sweet, and in his behaviour to me he had always manifested an uncommon affection. His outward conduct, so far as it fell under my notice, or I could learn it by the report of others, was perfectly decent and unblameable. There was nothing vicious in any part of his practice; but being of a studious, thoughtful turn, he placed his chief delight in the acquisition of learning, and made such acquisitions in it, that he had but few rivals in that of a classical kind. He was critically skilled in the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages; was beginning to make him-

self master of the Syriac, and perfectly understood'tl French and Italian; the latter of which he could spea fluently. Learned, however, as he was, he was ea and cheerful in his conversation, and entirely free fro the stiffness which is generally contracted by men d voted to such pursuits."

I had a brother once :
 Peace to the memory of a man of worth !
 A man of letters, and of manners too !
 Of manners sweet as virtue always wears
 When gay good humour dresses her in "smiles !
 He grac'd a College, in which order yet
 Was sacred, and was honour'd, lov'd, and wept
 By more than one, themselves conspicuous there

Another interesting tribute to his memory w found in the following letter.

LETTER XX.
 To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

May 8,

DEAR JOE,

Your letter did not reach me ti last post, when I had not time to answer it. Cambridge immediately after my brother's death

I am obliged to you for the particular account have sent me * * * * *

He to whom I have surrendered myself and all m cerns, has otherwise appointed, and let his will be He gives me much, which he withholds from o and if he was pleased to withhold all that makes a ward difference between me and the poor men in the street, it would still become me to say, be done.

It pleased God to cut short my brother's connections and expectations here, yet not without giving him lively and glorious views of a better happiness than any he could propose to himself in such a world as this. Notwithstanding his great learning (for he was one of the chief men in the University in that respect) he was candid and sincere in his inquiries after truth. Though he he could not come into my sentiments when I first acquainted him with them, nor in the conversation which I afterwards had with him upon the subject, could he be brought to acquiesce in them as scriptural and true, yet I had no sooner left St. Alban's than he began to study with the deepest attention those points in which we differed, and to furnish himself with the best writers upon them. His mind was kept open to conviction for five years, during all which time he laboured in this pursuit with unwaried diligence, as leisure and opportunity were afforded. Amongst his dying words were these, "Brother, I thought you wrong, yet wanted to believe as you did. I found myself not able to believe, yet always thought I should one day be brought to do so." From the study of these books he was brought upon his death-bed, to the study of himself, and there learnt to renounce his righteousness, and his own most amiable character, and to submit himself to the righteousness which is of God by faith. With these views he was desirous of death. Satisfied of his interest in the blessing purchased by the blood of Christ, he prayed for death with earnestness, felt the approaches of it with joy, and died in peace.

Yours, my dear friend,
W. COWPER.

The exquisite sensibility of Cowper, who suffered deeply on the loss of such a brother, and the peculiar blessing of a religious turn of mind, as an antidote against the corrosive influence of Devotion, if it had no other beneficial effect on man's character, would be still inestimable to him as a medicine for the anguish he feels in losing of his affection. How far it proved so in this case the reader will be enabled to judge by which Cowper describes his sensations on the event to one of his favourite correspondents:

LETTER XXI.

To Mrs. COWPER, Holles-Street, Cavendish Square.

Olney, J

DEAR COUSIN,

I am obliged to you many times thinking of an unseen friend, and better upon me. It gives me pleasure to hear especially to find that our gracious Lord ever weather out the storms you meet with, and cheer within the veil.

You judge rightly of the manner in which I have been affected by the Lord's late dispensation to my brother. I found in it cause of sorrow so near a relation, and one so deservedly loved, and that he left me just when our sentimental most interesting subject became the same to me. More cause of joy, that it pleased God to give and evident proof that he had changed his mind and adopted him into the number of his children. I hold myself peculiarly bound to thank him for what he might have done all that he was pleased to do for him, and yet have afforded him neither

mity to declare it. I doubt not that he enlight-
 understandings, and works a gracious change in
 orts of many in their last moments, whose sur-
 ing friends are not made acquainted with it.
 old me, that from the time he was first ordained
 an to be dissatisfied with his religious opinions,
 suspect that there were greater things concealed
 Bible than were generally believed or allowed to
 e. From the time when I first visited him after
 ease from St. Alban's, he began to read upon the
 . It was at that time I informed him of the
 of divine truth which I had received in that
 of affliction. He laid what I said to heart, and
 o furnish himself with the best writers on the
 erte points, whose works he read with great
 e and attention, comparing them all the while with
 icture. None ever truly and ingenuously sought
 th but they found it. A spirit of earnest inquir-
 ie gift of God, who never says to any, seek ye
 e in vain. Accordingly, about ten days before
 th, it pleased the Lord to dispel all his doubts,
 al in his heart the knowledge of the Saviour;
 give him firm and unshaken peace in the belief
 bility and willingness to save. As to the affair
 ortune-teller, he never mentioned it to me, nor
 ere any such paper found as you mention. I
 over all his papers before I left the place, and,
 re been such a one, must have discovered it. I
 eard the report from other quarters, but no other
 lars than that the woman foretold him when he
 die. I suppose there may be some truth in the
 ; but whatever he might think of it before his
 dge of the truth, and however extraordinary
 dictions might really be, I am satisfied that he
 en received far other views of the wisdom and

majesty of God than to suppose that he would entrust his secret counsels to a vagrant, who did not mean, I suppose, to be understood to have received her intelligence from the Fountain of Light, but thought herself sufficiently honoured by any who would give her credit for a secret intercourse of this kind with the Prince of Darkness.

Mrs. Unwin is much obliged to you for your kind inquiry after her. She is well, I thank God, as usual and sends her respects to you. Her son is in the ministry, and has the Living of Stock, in Essex. We were last week alarmed with an account of his being dangerously ill. Mrs. Unwin went to see him, and in a few days left him out of danger.

The letters of the afflicted Poet to this amiable and sympathetic relation have already afforded to my reader an insight of the pure recesses of Cowper's wonderful mind at some remarkable periods of his life, and if a reader's opinion of these letters is consonant to my own he will feel concerned, as I do, to find a chasm of years in this valuable correspondence; the more so as it was chiefly occasioned by a new, a long, and severe visitation of that mental malady, which periodically involved in calamitous oppression the superior faculties of this interesting sufferer. His extreme depression seems not to have recurred immediately on the death of his brother's death. In the autumn of the year 1793, which he sustained the affecting loss, he wrote the following serious but animated letter to Mr. Hill.

LETTER XXII.
TO JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

Sept. 25, 1770.

DEAR JOE,

I have not done conversing with terrestrial objects, though I should be happy were I able to hold more continual converse with a friend above the skies. He has my heart, but he allows a corner in it for all who show me kindness, and therefore one for you. The storm of '63 made a wreck of the friendships I had contracted in the course of many years, yours excepted, which has survived the tempest.

I thank you for your repeated invitation. Singular thanks are due to you for so *singular* an instance of your regard. I could not leave Olney unless in a case of necessity, without much inconvenience to myself and others.

In his sequestered life he seems to have been much consoled and entertained by the society of his pious friend, Mr. Newton, in whose religious pursuits he appears to have taken an active part, by the composition of sixty-eight hymns. Mr. Newton wished and expected him to have contributed a much larger number, as he has declared in his preface to that collection of hymns which contains these devotional effusions of Cowper distinguished by the initial letter of his name. The volume composed for the inhabitants of Olney was the joint production of the Divine and the Poet, and intended, as the former expressly says in his Preface, "as a monument to perpetuate the remembrance of an

intimate and endeared friendship. With this pl view," continues Mr. Newton, "I entered upon part, which would have been smaller than it is, a book would have appeared much sooner, and in different form, if the wise though mysterious dence of God hath not seen fit to cross my v We had not proceeded far upon our proposed pla fore my dear friend was prevented, by a long a fecting indisposition, from affording me any furth sistance." The severe illness of the Poet, to these expressions relate, began in 1773, and ext beyond the date of the Preface (from which the quoted), February 15, 1779.

These social labours of the Poet with an exan man of God, for the purpose of promoting simple among the lower classes of the people, must have delightful, in a high degree, to the benevolent he Cowper ; and I am persuaded he alludes to his feelings on this subject in the following passage fr Poem on Conversation.

True bliss, if man may reach it, is compos'd
Of hearts in union mutually disclos'd :
And farewell else, all hope of pure delight !
Those hearts should be reclaim'd, renew'd, up
Bad men, profaning friendship's hallowed name
Form in its stead a covenant of shame :

* * * * *

But souls that carry on a blest exchange
Of joys they meet with in their heavenly range
And with a fearless confidence make known
The sorrows sympathy esteems its own ;
Daily derive increasing light and force
From such communion, in their pleasant cou

ness the journey's roughness, and its length,
 their opposers with united strength,
 one in heart, in interest, and design,
 up each other to the race divine.

Fellowship in literary labour, for the noblest of
 it, must be delightful indeed, if attended with
 and, at all events, it is entitled to respect: yet
 it is doubted if the intense zeal with which Cow-
 per was marked in this fascinating pursuit, had not a dan-
 gerous tendency to undermine his very delicate health.
 An apprehension naturally arises from a recol-
 lecting what medical writers of great ability have
 written on the awful subject of mental derangement. When-
 ever the slightest tendency to that misfortune appears,
 it is expedient to guard a tender spirit from the
 assaults of Piety herself. So fearfully and won-
 derfully are we made, that man, in all conditions, ought
 to pray that he never may be led to think of
 God or of his Redeemer either too little or too

The charitable and religious zeal of the Poet led
 to any excesses of devotion, injurious to the ex-
 ercise of his nervous system, he is only the
 object of admiration and to pity: indeed, his
 virtues, and his misfortunes were calculated
 to excite those tender and temperate passions in their
 proper state, and to the highest degree. It may be
 said if any mortal could be more sincerely beloved
 than Cowper was by those who were
 acquainted with his private hours.

When the season was now arrived when the firm friend-
 Mrs. Unwin was put to the severest of trials,
 her conduct was such as to deserve those rare
 expressions of grateful attention and tenderness, which,

when she herself became the victim of age and infirmity, she received from that exemplary being, who considered himself indebted to her friendly vigilance for his life, and who never forgot an obligation whose memory was itself.

In 1773 he sunk into such paroxysms of religious melancholy, that he required an attendant of the most gentle, vigilant, and inflexible spirit. Such an attendant was found in that faithful guardian whom he had professed to love as a mother, and who watched over him, through this long fit of depressive malady, extended through several years, with that perfect mixture of tenderness and fortitude which constitutes the inestimable influence of maternal protection. I wish to pass rapidly over this calamitous period, and shall only observe, that he could surpass the sufferings of the patient, or the exertions of the nurse. That meritorious care received from her, even the most delightful of rewards, in seeing that the patient's mind, to whose restoration it had been devoted so much, not only gradually restored to the common enjoyments of life, successively endowed with various and marvellous funds of diversified talents, and diligent application.

The spirit of Cowper emerged, by slow degrees, from its very deep dejection ; and before his mind was sufficiently recovered to employ itself on literary composition, it sought, and found, much salutary amusement in educating a little group of tame Hares. On his expressing a wish to divert himself by rearing a single hare, the good-nature of his neighbours supplied him with three. The variety of their disposition became a source of great entertainment to his compassionate and contemplative spirit. One of the trio he has called in the *Task* : and a very animated minute account of this singular family humanized, and described in

mirably by himself, in prose, appeared first in the Gentleman's Magazine, and has been recently inserted in the second volume of his Poems. These interesting animals had not only the honour of being cherished and celebrated by a poet, but the pencil has also contributed to their renown; and their portraits, engraved from a drawing presented to Cowper by a friend unknown, may serve as a little embellishment to this life of their singularly tender and benevolent protector.

His three tame Hares, Mrs. Unwin, and Mr. Newton, were, for a considerable time, the only companions of Cowper; but as Mr. Newton was removed to a distance from his afflicted friend, by preferment in London, to which he was presented by that liberal encourager of active piety, Mr. Thornton, the friendly Divine, before he left Olney, 1780, humanely triumphed over the strong reluctance of Cowper to see a stranger, and kindly introduced him to the regard and good offices of the Rev. Mr. Bull, of Newport-Pagnell, who, from that time, considering it as a duty to visit the invalid once a fortnight, acquired, by degrees, his cordial and confidential esteem.

The affectionate temper of Cowper inclined him particularly to exert his talents, at the request of his friends, even in seasons when such exertion could hardly have been made without a painful degree of self-command.

At the suggestion of Mr. Newton we have seen him writing a series of hymns: at the request of Mr. Bull he translated several spiritual songs from the mystical poetry of Madam de la Mothe Guyon, the tender and fanciful enthusiast of France, whose talents and misfortunes drew upon her a long series of persecution from many acrimonious bigots, and secured to her the friendship of the mild and indulgent Fenelon!

We shall perceive, as we advance, that the greater

works of Cowper were also written at the express desire of persons whom he particularly regarded ; and it may be remarked, to the honour of friendship, that he considered its influence as the happiest inspiration ; or, to use his own expressive words,

The Poet's lyre, to fix his fame,
Should be the Poet's heart :
Affection lights a brighter flame
Than ever blaz'd by art.

The poetry of Cowper is itself an admirable illustration of this maxim ; and perhaps the maxim may point to the prime source of that uncommon force and felicity with which this most feeling poet commands the affection of his reader.

In delineating the life of an author, it seems the duty of biography to indicate the degree of influence which the warmth of his heart produced on the fertility of his mind. But those mingled flames of friendship and poetry which were to burst forth with the most powerful effect in the compositions of Cowper, were not yet kindled. His depressive malady had suspended the exercise of his genius for several years, and precluded him from renewing his correspondence with the relation whom he so cordially regarded, in Hertfordshire, except by the brief letters on pecuniary concerns, in 1779. But in the spring of the following year, a letter to Mr. Hill abundantly proves that he had regained the free exercise of his talents, both serious and sportive.

LETTER XXIII.
To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

Olney, May 6, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am much obliged to you for your speedy answer to my queries. I know less of the law than a country attorney, yet some times I think I have almost as much business. My former connection with the profession has got wind, and though I earnestly profess, and protest, and proclaim it abroad, that I know nothing of the matter, they cannot be persuaded to believe that a head once endued with a legal perriwig can ever be deficient in those natural endowments it is supposed to cover. I have had the good fortune to be once or twice in the right, which added to the cheapness of a gratuitous counsel, has advanced my credit to a degree I never expected to attain in the capacity of a Lawyer. Indeed, if two of the wisest in the science of jurisprudence may give opposite opinions upon the same point, which does not unfrequently happen, it seems to be a matter of indifference whether a man answers by rule or at a venture. He that stumbles upon the right side of the question is just as useful to his client as he that arrives at the same end by regular approaches, and is conducted to the mark he aims at by the greatest authorities.

* * * * *

These violent attacks of a distemper, so fatal, are very alarming to all who esteem and respect the Chancellor as he deserves. A life of confinement, and of anxious attention to important objects, where the habit is bilious to such a terrible degree, threatens to be but a short one; and I wish he may not be made a text for men of reflection to moralize upon, affording a conspi-

cuous instance of the transient and fading nature of all human accomplishments and attainments.

Yours affectionately,

W. COWPER.

At this time his attention was irresistably recalled to his cousin, Mrs. Cowper, by hearing that she was deeply afflicted ; and he wrote to her the following letter on the loss of her brother, Frederick Madan, a soldier, who died in America, after having distinguished himself by poetical talents, as well as by military virtues.

LETTER XXIV.

To Mrs. COWPER.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

May 10, 1780.

I do not write to comfort you ; that office is not likely to be well performed by one who has no comfort for himself ; nor to comply with an impertinent ceremony, which, in general, might well be spared upon such occasions ; but because I would not seem indifferent to the concerns of those I have so much reason to esteem and love. If I did not sorrow for your brother's death, I should expect that nobody would for mine : when I knew him he was much beloved, and I doubt not continued to be so. To live and die together is the lot of a few happy families, who hardly know what separation means, and one sepulchre serves them all ; but the ashes of our kindred are dispersed indeed. Whether the American gulf has swallowed up any other of my relations I know not ; it has made many mourners.

Believe me, my dear cousin, though after a long silence, which perhaps nothing less than the present concern could have prevailed with me to interrupt, as much as ever,

Your affectionate kinsman,
W. C.

The next letter to Mr. Hill affords a striking proof of Cowper's compassionate feelings towards the poor around him.

LETTER XXV.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

MON AMI,

July 8, 1780.

If ever you take the tip of the Chancellor's ear between your finger and thumb, you can hardly improve the opportunity to better purpose, than if you should whisper into it the voice of compassion and lenity to the lace-makers. I am an eye witness of their poverty, and do know, that hundreds in this little town are upon the point of starving, and that the most unremitting industry is but barely sufficient to keep them from it. I know that the bill by which they would have been so fatally affected is thrown out; but Lord Stormont threatens them with another; and if another like it should pass, they are undone. We lately sent a petition from hence to Lord Dartmouth: I signed it, and am sure the contents are true. The purport of it was to inform him that there are very near one thousand two hundred lace-makers in this beggarly town, the most of whom had reason enough, while the bill was in agitation, to look upon every loaf they bought as the last they should ever be able to earn. I can never

think it good policy to incur the certain inconvenience of ruining thirty-thousand, in order to prevent a mote and possible damage, though to a much greater number. The measure is like a scythe, and the place-makers are the sickly crop that trembles beneath the edge of it. The prospect of peace with America is like the streak of dawn in their horizon; but this is like a black cloud behind it, that threatens their loss of a comfortable day with utter extinction.

I did not perceive till this moment that I had tacitly joined two similies together, a practice, which, though warranted by the example of Homer, and allowable in an epic poem, is rather luxuriant and licentious in a letter; lest I should add another, I conclude.

His affectionate effort in renewing his correspondence with Mrs. Cowper, to whom he had been accustomed to pour forth his heart without reserve, appears to have had a beneficial effect on his reviving spirit. This pathetic letter was followed, in the course of a few months, by a letter of a more lively cast, in which the reader will find some touches of his native humour and a vein of pleasantry peculiar to himself.

LETTER XXVI.

To Mrs. COWPER, Park-Street, Grosvenor-Square

July 20, 1801

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Mr. Newton having desired to be of the party, I am come to meet him. I am now some sixteen years older, at least, than when I was last; but the effects of time seem to have taken rather on the outside of my head than within it.

was brown is become grey, but what was foolish remains foolish still. Green fruit must rot before it ripens, if the season is such as to afford it nothing but cold winds and dark clouds, that interrupt every ray of sunshine. My days steal away silently, and march on (as poor mad King Lear would have made his soldiers march) as if they were shod with felt ; not so silently but that I hear them ; yet were it not that I am always listening to their flight, having no infirmity that I had not when I was much younger, I should deceive myself with an imagination that I am still young.

I am fond of writing, as an amusement, but I do not always find it one. Being rather scantily furnished with subjects that are good for any thing, and corresponding only with those who have no relish for such as are good for nothing, I find myself reduced to the necessity, the disagreeable necessity, of writing about myself. This does not mend the matter much, for though in a description of my own condition, I discover abundant materials to employ my pen upon, yet as the task is not very agreeable to *me*, so I am sufficiently aware, that it is likely to prove irksome to others. A painter who should confine himself, in the exercise of his art, to the drawing of his own picture, must be a wonderful coxcomb, if he did not grow sick of his occupation, and be peculiarly fortunate, if he did not make others as sick as himself.

Remote as your dwelling is from the late scene of riot and confusion, I hope that though you could not but hear the report, you heard no more, and that the roarings of the mad multitude did not reach you. That was a day of terror to the innocent, and the present is a day of still greater terror to the guilty. The law was for a few moments like an arrow in the quiver, seemed to be of no use, and did no execution ; now it is an ar-

row upon the string, and many who despised it late are trembling as they stand before the point of it.

I have talked more already than I have formerly done in three visits; you remember my taciturnity never to be forgotten by those who knew me; not depart entirely from what might be, for aught I know, the most shining part of my character. I here, by my mouth, make my bow, and return to Olney.

W. C.

The next is a little more serious than its predecessor, yet equally a proof that the affections of his heart, and the energy of his mind, were now happily restored.

LETTER XXVII.

To Mrs. COWPER, Park-Street, Grosvenor-Square.

August 31, 1780.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I am obliged to you for your long letter, which did not seem so, and for your short one, which was more than I had reason to expect. Short as it was, it conveyed two interesting articles of intelligence. An account of your recovery from a fever, and of Lady Cowper's death. The latter was, I suppose, to be expected, for by what remembrance I have of her Ladyship, who was never much acquainted with her, she had reached those years that are always found on the borders of another world. As for you, your time of life is comparatively of a youthful date. You may think of death as much as you please (you cannot think of it too much), but I hope you will live to think of it many years.

costs me not much difficulty to suppose that my
 s, who were already grown old, when I saw them
 re old still; but it costs me a good deal some-
 to think of those who were at that time young, as
 older than they were. Not having been an eye wit-
 f the change that time has made in them, and my
 r idea of them not being corrected by observation,
 rains the same; my memory presents me with
 nage unimpaired, and while it retains the resem-
 : of what they were, forgets that by this time the
 e may have lost much of its likeness, through the
 tion that succeeding years have made in the ori-

I know not what impressions time may have
 upon your person; for while his claws (as our
 iams called them) strike deep furrows in some
 he seems to sheath them with much tenderness,
 fearful of doing injury to others. But though
 my to the person, he is a friend to the mind, and
 ave found him so. Though even in this respect
 eatment of us depends upon what he meets with
 hands; if we use him well, and listen to his ad-
 ions, he is a friend indeed, but otherwise the
 of enemies, who takes from us daily something
 ve valued, and gives us nothing better in its stead.
 vell with them, who, like you, can stand a tip-toe
 : mountain top of human life, look down with
 ire upon the valley they have passed, and some-
 stretch out their wings in joyful hope of a happy
 into eternity. Yet a little while and your hope
 e accomplished.

When you can favour me with a little account of
 own family without inconvenience, I shall be glad
 eive it; for though separated from my kindred
 le more than half a century of miles, I know as lit-

tle of their concerns as if oceans and continents were interposed between us.

Yours, my dear cousin,

WM. COWPER.

The following letter to Mr. Hill contains a poem already printed in the works of Cowper, but the reader will probably be gratified in finding a little favourite piece of pleasantry introduced to him, as it was originally dispatched by the author for the amusement of a friend.

LETTER XXVIII.
To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

Dec. 25, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Weary with rather a long walk in the snow, I am not likely to write a very sprightly letter, or to produce any thing that may cheer this gloomy season, unless I have recourse to my pocket-book, where, perhaps, I may find something to transcribe; something that was written before the Sun had taken leave of our hemisphere, and when I was less fatigued than I am at present.

Happy is the man who knows just so much of the law as to make himself a little merry now and then with the solemnity of juridical proceedings. I have heard of common law judgments before now, indeed have been present at the delivery of some, that, according to my poor apprehension, while they paid the utmost respect to the letter of a statute, have departed widely from the spirit of it, and, being governed entirely by the point of law, have left equity, reason, and

common sense behind them at an infinite distance. You will judge whether the following report of a case, drawn up by myself, be not a proof and illustration of this satirical assertion.

NOSE, *Plaintiff*—EYES, *Defendants*.

1.

Between Nose and Eyes a sad contest arose,
The Spectacles set them unhappily wrong,
The point in dispute was, as all the world knows,
To which the said Spectacles ought to belong.

2.

So the Tongue was the Lawyer, and argued the cause
With a great deal of skill, and a wig full of learning,
While chief Baron Ear, set to balance the laws,
So fam'd for his talents at nicely discerning.

3.

In behalf of the Nose, it will quickly appear,
And your Lordship, he said, will undoubtedly find,
That the Nose has had Spectacles always to wear,
Which amounts to possession, time out of mind.

4.

Then holding the Spectacles up to the Court,
Your Lordship observes they are made with a
straddle

As wide as the ridge of the Nose is, in short,
Design'd to sit close to it, just like a saddle.

5.

Again would your Lordship a moment suppose,
(Tis a case that has happen'd, and may be again)
That the visage or countenance had not a Nose,
Pray who would, or who could, wear Spectacles then?

6.

On the whole it appears, and my argumen
With a reasoning the court will never con
That the Spectacles plainly were made for
And the Nose was as plainly intended for

7.

Then shifting his side, as a Lawyer know:
He pleaded again in behalf of the Eyes ;
But what were his arguments to few people !
For the court did not think they were equa

8.

So his Lordship decreed, with a grave sole
Decisive and clear, without one *if* or *but*,
That whenever the Nose put his Spectacle
By day-light, or candle-light—Eyes should

Yours affectionately,

W. CO

LETTER XXIX.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

Feb

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am glad you were p
my report of so extraordinary a case. If the
versifying the decisions of our Courts of J
struck me, while I had the honour to atter
would perhaps have been no difficult matt
compiled a volume of such amusing and
precedents, which, if they wanted the eloqu
Greek or Roman oratory, would have co
that deficiency by the harmony of rhyme an

Your account of my uncle and your m
me great pleasure. I have long been afraid

some in whose welfare I always feel myself interested, lest the question should produce a painful result. Longevity is the lot of so few, and is so seldom enjoyed comfortably by the associations of good health and good spirits, that I could not very reasonably suppose either your relations or mine so happy in those respects as it seems they are. May they continue to those blessings so long as the date of life shall allow. I do not think that in these coster-monger days, to have a notion Falstaff calls them, an antediluvian at all a desirable thing; but to live comfortably, to well do live, is a great matter, and comprehends every thing that can be wished for on this side the great gulf that hangs between Time and Eternity. I am well my better friend than any I have to boast of among the Lords or Gentlemen of the House of Commons.

Yours ever,

WM. COWPER.

reviving Poet, who had lived a half century with a modest idea of his own extraordinary talents, had hitherto given no composition professedly to the public, now assumed himself with preparations to do so as an author. But he hoped to conduct those preparations with a modest secrecy, and was astonished when one of his intimate friends apprized of his de-

LETTER XXX.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

May 9, 1781.

DEAR SIR,

I am in the press, and it is in my power to send you a copy of it. But how mysterious is the convey-

3307A

ance of intelligence from one end to the other great city !—Not many days since, except and he but little taller than yourself, all London ignorant of it ; for I do not suppose that the prints have yet announced the most agreeable the title-page, which is the basis of the agreement, having so lately reached the publisher ; it is known to you, who live at least two miles from my confidant upon the occasion.

My labours are principally the productive winter ; all indeed, except a few of the minutes. When I can find no other occupation, I then when I think, I am very apt to do it in rhyme. It comes to pass that the season of the year will rally pinches off the flowers of poetry, unfavourable such as they are, and crowns me with a wreath of laurel. In this respect, therefore, I and my cotemporary Bards are by no means upon a par. They want the delightful influences of fine weather, fine food, and a brisk motion of the animal spirits make almost the language of nature : and I, when I depend from all the leaves of the Parnassian laurel, when a reasonable man would as little expect to succeed in verse as to hear a black-bird whistle. Must be my apology to you for whatever want of vigour and animation you may observe in what you will have the perusal of. As to the public, if I can do me not, there is no remedy. A friend will not consider all disadvantages, and make as large allowances as an author can wish, and larger perhaps he has any right to expect ; but not so the public ; whatever they do not like, they will not be persuaded to forgive, and it would be vain to tell *them* that I wrote my verse in January.

they would immediately reply "why did you not write them in May?" A question that might puzzle a wiser head than we Poets are generally blessed with.

I was informed by Mrs. Unwin that she strongly solicited her friend to devote his thoughts to Poetry, of considerable extent, on his recovery from his very long fit of mental dejection, suggesting to him, at the same time, the first subject of his song, "The progress of Error!" which the reader will recollect as the second poem in his first volume. The time when that volume was completed, and the motives of its excellent author for giving it to the world, are clearly displayed in the following very interesting letter to his fair poetical cousin.

LETTER XXXI.
To Mrs. COWPER.

October 19, 1781.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Your fear lest I should think you unworthy of my correspondence on account of your delay to answer, may change sides now, and more properly belongs to me. It is long since I received your last, and yet I believe I can say truly that not a post has gone by me since the receipt of it, that has not reminded me of the debt I owe you for your obliging and unreserved communications, both in prose and verse, especially for the latter, because I consider them as marks of your peculiar confidence. The truth is, I have been such a verse-maker myself, and so busy in preparing a volume for the press, which I imagine will make its appearance in the course of the winter, that I hardly

had leisure to listen to the calls of any other employment. It is, however, finished, and gone to the printer's, and I have nothing now to do with it, but to correct the sheets as they are sent to me, and consign over to the judgment of the public. It is a bold undertaking at this time of day, when so many writers of greatest abilities have gone before, who seem to have anticipated every valuable subject, as well as all the graces of poetical embellishment, to step forth into the world in the character of a bard, especially when considered that luxury, idleness, and vice have debauched the public taste, and that nothing hardly welcome, but childish fiction, or what has at least a tendency to excite a laugh. I thought, however, I had stumbled upon some subjects that had never before been poetically treated, and upon some others which I imagined it would not be difficult to give an air of novelty, by the manner of treating them. My drift is to be useful; a point which, however, I think I should in vain aim at, unless I could be likewise entertaining. I have, therefore, fixed these two strings upon my bow, and by the help of both have done my best to send my arrow to the mark. My readers will hardly have begun to laugh, before they will be called upon to correct that levity, and peruse me with a more serious air. As to the effect, I leave it alone in the hands who can alone produce it; neither prose nor verse can reform the manners of a dissolute age, much less can they inspire a sense of religious obligation unless assisted and made efficacious by the power which superintends the truth he has vouchsafed to impart.

You made my heart ache with a sympathetic sorrow when you described the state of your mind on occasion of your late visit into Hertfordshire. Had I been previously informed of your journey before you made it

should have been able to have foretold all your feelings with the most unerring certainty of prediction. I will never cease to feel upon that subject ; but with principles of resignation and acquiescence in the will, you will always feel as becomes a Christian. We are forbidden to murmur, but we are not forbidden to regret ; and whom we loved tenderly while living, we may still pursue with an affectionate remembrance, without having any occasion to charge ourselves with rebellion against the Sovereignty that appointed a separation. A day is coming, when I am confident you will see and know that mercy to both parties was the principal agent in a scene, the recollection of which is still painful.

Those who read what the Poet has here said of his intended publication, may perhaps think it strange that it was introduced to the world with a preface not written by himself, but by his friend Mr. Newton. The circumstance is singular ; but it arose from two amiable peculiarities in the character of Cowper, his extreme diffidence in regard to himself, and his kind eagerness to gratify the affectionate ambition of a friend, whom he tenderly esteemed ! Mr. Newton has avowed the fervency of this ambition in a very ingenuous and manly manner ; and they must have little candour, indeed, who are disposed to cavil at his alacrity in presenting himself to the public as the bosom friend of that incomparable author whom he had attended so faithfully in sickness and in sorrow !—I hope it is no sin to covet honour as the friend of Cowper, for if it is, I fear I may say but too truly in the words of Shakespeare,

“ I am the most offending soul alive.”

Happy, however, if I may be able so to co-
finish this biographical compilation, that
knew and loved him best may be the most
applaud me as his friend ; a title that my heart
to all other distinction !

The immediate success of his first volume
far from being equal to its extraordinary merits
some time it seemed to be neglected by the public
although the first poem in the collection contains
powerful image of its author, as might be sufficient
not only to excite attention, but to attachment :
for Cowper had undesignedly a masterly portrait
of himself, in describing the poet : I allude to the
following verses in “ Talisman ”

Nature, exerting an unwearied power,
Forms, opens, and gives scent to every flower
Spreads the fresh verdure of the field, and
The dancing Naiads through the dewy mead
She fills profuse ten thousand little throats
With music, modulating all their notes ;
And charms the woodland scenes, and wilds
With artless airs, and concerts of her own
But seldom, (as if fearful of expense)
Vouchsafes to man a poet's just pretence—
Fervency, freedom, fluency of thought,
Harmony, strength, words exquisitely sought
Fancy, that from the bow that spans the sky
Brings colours, dypt in Heaven, that never
A soul exalted above earth, a mind
Skill'd in the characters that form mankind
And, as the Sun, in rising beauty dress'd,
Looks from the dappled orient to the West

And mark, whatever clouds may interpose,
 yet his race begins, its glorious close;
 like his to catch the distant goal,
 the wheels of verse begin to roll,
 to shed illuminating rays
 scene and subject it surveys:
 trac'd the man asserts a poet's name,
 the world cheerfully admits the claim.

The concluding lines may be considered as an omen of that celebrity, which such a writer, in the process of time, could not fail to obtain. Yet powerful as the claims of Cowper were to instant admiration and applause, it must be allowed (as an apology for the inattention of the public) that he hazarded some sentiments in his first volume which were very likely to obstruct its immediate success in the world. I particularly allude to his bold eulogy on Whitfield, whom the dramatic satire of Foote, in his *Comedy of the Minor*, had taught the nation to deride as a mischievous fanatic. I allude also to a little acrimonious censure, in which he had indulged himself, against one of Whitfield's devout rivals, Mr. Charles Wesley, for allowing sacred music to form a part of his occupation on a Sunday evening. Such praise, and such reproof, bestowed on popular enthusiasts, might easily induce many careless readers, unacquainted with the singular mildness and purity of character that really belonged to the new Poet, to reject his book, without giving it a fair perusal, as the production of a recluse, inflamed with the fierce spirit of bigotry. No supposition could have been wider from the truth; for Cowper was indeed a rare example of true Christian benevolence: yet, as the best of men have their little occasional foibles, he allowed himself, sometimes with his pen, but never, I believe, in conver-

sation, to speak rather acrimoniously of severe suits and pastimes, that seem not to deserve a ternity of reproof. Of this he was aware himself, confessed it, in the most ingenuous manner, on a following occasion. One of his intimate friends, when, in the first volume of his Poems, the following passage from the younger Pliny, as descriptive of Book : "*Multa tenuiter, multa sublimiter, multum nuste, multa tenere, multa dulciter, multa cum*" Many passages are delicate, many sublime, beautiful, many tender, many sweet, many acrimonious.

Cowper was pleased with the application, and with the utmost candour and sincerity, "The part is very true indeed ; yes ! yes ! there are 'cum bile,' many acrimonious.

These little occasional touches of austerity naturally arise in a life so sequestered ; but how subject of surprize and admiration is it, to behold an author starting under such a load of disadvantage, displaying, on the sudden, such a variety of excellence. For, neglected as it was for a few years, the first volume of Cowper exhibits such a diversity of powers, as have been given very rarely indeed to any individual of the modern or of the ancient world. He is not only great in passages of pathos and sublimity, but he is equally admirable in wit and humour. In his descanting most copiously on sacred subjects, with the animation of a Prophet, and the simplicity of an infant, he paints the ludicrous characters of common life with the comic force of Moliere ; particularly in his Poem on Conversation, and his exquisite portrait of his fretful temper : a piece of moral painting so finished, and so happily calculated to promote good humour, that a transcript of the verses shall close the first part of these Memoirs.

Some fretful tempers wince at every touch ;
You always do too little or too much :
You speak with life, in hopes to entertain ;
Your elevated voice goes through the brain :
You fall at once into a lower key ;
You're worse :—the drone-pipe of an humble Bee !
Your Southern sash admits too strong a light ;
You rise and drop the curtain :—now its night.
He shakes with cold ;—you stir the fire, and strive
To make a blaze :—that's roasting him alive.
Serve him with ven'son, and he chooses Fish ;
With soal—that's just the sort he would not wish.
He takes what he at first profess'd to loath ;
And in due time feeds heartily on both :
Yet, still o'erclouded with a constant frown ;
He does not swallow, but he gulps it down.
Your hope to please him vain on every plan,
Himself should work that wonder, if he can.
Alas ! his efforts double his distress ;
He likes yours little, and his own still less.
Thus always teasing others, always teas'd,
His only pleasure is—to be displeas'd.



THE
LIFE OF COWPER.

.....
PART THE SECOND.
.....

Ανεγνηστος αειδαν.

A NEW æra opens in the history of the Poet, from incident that gave fresh ardour and vivacity to his tile imagination. In September, 1781, he happened form an acquaintance with a lady, highly accomshed herself, and singularly happy in animating and ecting the fancy of her poetical friends. The world l perfectly agree with me in this eulogy, when I add, t to this lady we are primarily indebted for the m of the Task, for the Ballad of John Gilpin, and the Translation of Homer. But in my lively sense her merit, I am almost forgetting my immediate y, as the Biographer of the Poet, to introduce her umstantially to the acquaintance of my Reader.

A lady, whose name was Jones, was one of the few ghbours admitted in the residence of the retired t. She was the wife of a Clergyman, who resided he village of Clifton, within a mile of Olney. Her r, the widow of Sir Robert Austen, Baronet, came ass some time with her in the Autumn of 1781; as the two ladies chanced to call at a shop in Olney,

opposite to the house of Mrs. Unwin, Cowper observed them from his window.—Although naturally shy, and now rendered more so by his very long illness, he was so struck with the appearance of the stranger, that hearing she was sister to Mrs. Jones, he requested Mrs. Unwin to invite them to tea. So strong was his reluctance to admit the company of strangers, that after he had occasioned this invitation, he was for a long time unwilling to join the little party; but having forced himself at last to engage in conversation with Lady Austen, he was so reanimated by her uncommon colloquial talents, that he attended the Ladies on their return to Clifton, and from that time continued to cultivate the regard of his new acquaintance with such assiduous attention, that she soon received from him the familiar and endearing title of Sister Ann.

The great and happy influence which an interest that seems at first sight so trivial, produced rapidly on the imagination of Cowper, will best appear from the following Epistle, which, soon after Lady Austen's return to London for the winter, she addressed to her, on the 17th of December, 1781.

Dear Anna—Between friend and friend,
Prose answers every common end;
Serves, in a plain, and homely way,
To express the occurrence of the day;
Our health, the weather, and the news;
What walks we take, what books we choose
And all the floating thoughts, we find
Upon the surface of the mind.

But when a Poet takes up the pen,
Far more alive than other men,

He feels a gentle tingling come
Down to his finger and his thumb,
Deriv'd from nature's noblest part,
The centre of a glowing heart !
And this is what the world, who knows
No flights above the pitch of prose,
His more sublime vagaries slighting,
Denominates an itch for writing.
No wonder I, who scribble rhyme,
To catch the triflers of the time,
And tell them truths divine and clear,
Which, couch'd in prose, they will not hear :
Who labour hard to allure, and draw
The loiterers I never saw,
Should feel that itching, and that tingling,
With all my purpose intermingling,
To your intrinsic merit true,
When call'd to address myself to you.

Mysterious are his ways, whose power
Brings forth that unexpected hour,
When minds that never met before,
Shall meet, unite, and part no more :
It is th' allotment of the skies,
The Hand of the Supremely Wise,
That guides and governs our affections,
And plans and orders our connections ;
Directs us in our distant road,
And marks the bounds of our abode.
Thus we were settled when you found us,
Peasants and children all around us,
Not dreaming of so dear a friend,
Deep in the abyss of Silver-End.*

* An obscure part of Olney, adjoining to the residence of Cowper, which faced the market-place.

LIFE OF COWPER.

us Martha, even against her will,
Arch'd on the top of yonder hill ;
And you, though you must needs prefer
The fairest scene of sweet Sancerre,*
Are come from distant Loire, to choose
A cottage on the Banks of Ouse.
This page of Providence quite new,
And now just opening to our view,
Employs our present thoughts and pains,
To guess, and spell, what it contains :
But day by day, and year by year,
Will make the dark ænigma clear ;
And furnish us, perhaps, at last,
Like other scenes already past,
With proof, that we and our affairs
Are part of a Jehovah's cares :
For God unfolds, by slow degrees,
The purport of his deep decrees ;
Sheds every hour a clearer light
In aid of our defective sight ;
And spreads at length, before the soul,
A beautiful and perfect whole,
Which busy man's inventive brain
Toils to anticipate in vain.

Say, Anna, had you never known
The beauties of a Rose full blown,
Could you, though luminous your eye,
By looking on the bud, descry,
Or guess, with a prophetic power,
The future splendour of the flower ?
Just so th' Omnipotent who turns
The system of a world's concerns,

* Lady Austen's residence in France

From mere minutiae can educe
Events of most important use,
And bid a dawning sky display
The blaze of a meridian day.
The works of man tend, one and all,
As needs they must, from great to small ;
And vanity absorbs at length
The monuments of human strength.
But who can tell how vast the plan
Which this day's incident began ?
Too small, perhaps, the slight occasion
For our dim-sighted observation ;
It pass'd unnotic'd, as the bird
That cleaves the yielding air unheard,
And yet may prove, when understood,
An harbinger of endless good.

Not that I deem, or mean to call,
Friendship a blessing cheap or small ;
But merely to remark, that ours,
Like some of nature's sweetest flowers,
Rose from the seed of tiny size,
That seem'd to promise no such prize :
A transient visit intervening,
And made almost without a meaning,
(Hardly the effect of inclination,
Much less of pleasing expectation !)
Produc'd a friendship, then begun,
That has cemented us in one ;
And plac'd it in our power to prove,
By long fidelity and love,
That Solomon has wisely spoken :
" A three-fold cord is not soon broken."

In this interesting Poem the Author expressly and devout presage of the superior powers were to arise, in the process of time, from so unexpected, and so pleasing ; but he did not have been aware, in the slightest degree, of the dangers that must naturally attend an intimacy so close, yet perfectly innocent, between a young Lady and a Gentleman, who, with very different mental powers, each reason to flatter herself that she could promote the studies, and animate the fascinating Bard.

Genius of the most exquisite kind is sometimes perhaps generally, so modest and diffident, that it requires continual solicitation and encouragement to give the voice of sympathy and friendship, to permanent and successful exertion. Such was the case of Cowper ; and he therefore could not but be a cheerful and animating society to his accomplished friend, as a blessing conferred on him by the signal favour of Providence. She returned in the summer to the house of her sister, situated on the brow of a hill, the foot of which is washed by the Ouse, as it flows between Clifton and Olney. Her benevolent ingenuity was exerted to guard Cowper from sinking again into that hypochondria to which, even in her company, he sometimes discovered an alarming tendency. In his occupation and amusement, she furnished him with a small portable printing-press, and he gave her the following verses, printed by him and enclosed in a billet, that alludes to the occasion on which they were composed—a very unseasonable interruption of the communication between Olney.

To watch the storms, and hear the sky
 Give all our Almanacks the lie ;
 To shake with cold, and see the plains
 In Autumn drown'd with Wintry rains ;
 'Tis thus I spend my moments here,
 And wish myself a Dutch Mynheer ;
 I then should have no need of wit
 For lumpish Hollander unfit !
 Nor should I then repine at mud,
 Or meadows delug'd by a flood ;
 But in a bog live well content,
 And find it just my element ;
 Should be a clod, and not a man,
 Nor wish in vain for Sister Ann,
 With charitable aid to drag
 My mind out of its proper quag ;
 Should have the genius of a boor,
 And no ambition to have more.

MY DEAR SISTER,

You see my beginning—I do not know but in time I may proceed even to the printing of halfpenny Ballads—Excuse the coarseness of my paper—I wasted such a quantity before I could accomplish any thing legible, that I could not afford finer. I intend to employ an ingenious mechanic of the town to make me a longer case ; for you may observe, that my lines turn up their tails like Dutch mastiffs, so difficult do I find it to make the two halves exactly coincide with each other.

We wait with impatience for the departure of this unseasonable flood—We think of you, and talk of you, but we can do no more, till the waters shall subside. I do not think our correspondence should drop because we are within a mile of each other. It is but an ima-

ginary approximation, the flood having in reality as effectually parted us, as if the British Channel rolled between us.

Yours, my dear Sister, with Mrs. Unwin's best love.

WM. COWPER.

August 12, 1782.

A flood that precluded him from the conversation of such an enlivening friend was to Cowper a serious evil; but he was happily relieved from the apprehension of such disappointment in future, by seeing the friend so pleasing and so useful to him very comfortably settled as his next door neighbour.

Lady Austen became a tenant of the Parsonage in Olney; when Mr. Newton occupied that Parsonage he had opened a door in the garden wall that admitted him, in the most commodious manner, to visit the sequestered Poet, who resided in the next house. Lady Austen had the advantage of this easy intercourse, and so captivating was her society, both to Cowper and to Mrs. Unwin, that these intimate neighbours might be almost said to make one family, as it became their custom to dine always together, alternately, in the houses of the two ladies.

The musical talents of Lady Austen induced Cowper to write a few songs of peculiar sweetness and pathos, to suit particular airs that she was accustomed to play on the Harpsichord. I insert three of these as proofs, that even in his hours of social amusement, the Poet loved to dwell on ideas of tender devotion and pathetic solemnity.

SONG

*Written in the Summer of 1783, at the request of
Lady Austen.*

AIR—"My fond Shepherds of late," &c.

No longer I follow a sound ;
No longer a dream I pursue :
O Happiness, not to be found,
Unattainable treasure, adieu !

I have sought thee in splendour and dress ;
In the regions of pleasure and taste :
I have sought thee, and seem'd to possess,
But have prov'd thee a vision at last.

An humble ambition and hope
The voice of true wisdom inspires ;
'Tis sufficient if Peace be the scope,
And the summit of all our desires.

Peace may be the lot of the mind,
That seeks it in meekness and love ;
But rapture and bliss are confin'd
To the glorified Spirits above.

SONG 2.

AIR—"The Lass of Pattie's Mill."

When all within is peace,
How Nature seems to smile !

Delights that never cease,
The livelong day beguile.
From morn to dewy eve,
With open hand she showers
Fresh blessings, to deceive
And soothe the silent hours.

It is content of heart
Gives Nature power to please ;
The mind that feels no smart
Enlivens all it sees ;
Can make a wint'ry sky
Seem bright as smiling May,
And evening's closing eye
As peep of early day.

The vast majestic globe,
So beauteously array'd
In Nature's various robe,
With wond'rous skill display'd,
Is, to a mourner's heart,
A dreary wild at best :
It flutters to depart,
And longs to be at rest.

I add the following Song (adapted to the life of Scipio) for two reasons ; because it is pleasing to mention the celebrity of a brave man, calamitous in his career of honour, and because the Song is a favourite production of the Poet's ; so much so that, during a season of depressive illness, he amused himself by translating it into Latin verse.

SONG 3.

On the loss of the Royal George.

Toll for the brave !
The brave ! that are no more !
All sunk beneath the wave,
Fast by their native shore.

Eight hundred of the brave,
Whose courage well was tried,
Had made the vessel heel,
And laid her on her side.

A land-breeze shook the shrouds,
And she was overset ;
Down went the Royal George,
With all her crew complete.

Toll for the brave !
Brave Kempenfelt is gone :
His last sea-fight is fought ;
His work of glory done.

It was not in the battle ;
No tempest gave the shock ;
She sprang no fatal leak ;
She ran upon no rock.

His sword was in its sheath,
His fingers held the pen,
When Kempenfelt went down,
With twice four hundred men.

LIFE OF COWPER.

Weigh the vessel up,
Once dreaded by our foes !
And mingle with our cup
The tear that England owes.

Her timbers yet are sound,
And she may float again,
Full charg'd with England's thunder,
And plough the distant main.

But Kempenfelt is gone,
His victories are o'er ;
And he and his eight hundred
Shall plough the wave no more.

Let the reader who wishes to impress on his mind just idea of the variety and extent of Cowper's poetic powers, contrast this heroic Ballad, of exquisite pathos with the diverting history of John Gilpin !

That admirable and highly popular piece of prose and poetry was composed at the period of which I am now speaking (1783). An elegant and judicious writer, has recently favoured the public with three interesting volumes relating to the early poets of our country, lectures, that a poem, written by the celebrated Thomas More in his youth, (the merry jest of the giant and Frere), may have suggested to Cowper the tale of John Gilpin : but that fascinating Ballad of different origin ; and it is a very remarkable fact, full of gaiety and humour, as this favourite of the public has abundantly proved itself to be, it was composed at a time when the spirit of the Poet, who informed me himself, was very deeply tinged.

ssive malady. It happened one afternoon, in those when his accomplished friend, Lady Austen, a part of his little evening circle, that she observed him sinking into increasing dejection: it was her custom, on these occasions, to try all the resources of her sprightly powers for his immediate relief. She drew from the story of John Gilpin (which had been treasured in her memory from her childhood) to dissipate the gloom of the passing hour. Its effect on the fancy of Cowper had the air of enchantment: he informed her the next morning, that convulsions of laughter, excited on by his recollection of her story, had kept him awake during the greatest part of the night, and that he had turned it into a Ballad. So arose the pleasant Poem of John Gilpin. It was eagerly copied, and as it went its way rapidly to the newspapers, it was seized by the lively spirit of Henderson, the Comedian, a native of Newport-Pagnell, and a man, like the Yorick bed by Shakspeare, "of infinite jest, and most excellent fancy;" it was seized by Henderson as a proper subject for the display of his own comic powers; and in reciting it in his public readings, he gave uncommon celebrity to the Ballad, before the public suspected to what Poet they were indebted for the sudden and ludicrous amusement. Many readers were astonished when the Poem made its first authentic appearance in the second volume of Cowper. In some of the Poet to Mr. Hill, which did not reach me as my work was nearly finished, I find an account of Gilpin's first introduction to the world, and a circumstance relating to the first volume of Cowper's Poems which may render the following selection from his correspondence peculiarly interesting.

LIFE OF COWPER.

LETTER XXXII.
TO JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

Feb. 13 & 20, 1783.

DEAR FRIEND, In writing to you I never war-
object. Self is always at hand, and Self, with
cerns, is always interesting to a friend.
You may think, perhaps, that having commen-
et by profession, I am always writing verses.
—I have written nothing, at least finished not-
since I published—except a certain facetious histo-
John Gilpin, which Mr. Unwin would send to the
lic Advertiser; perhaps you might read it with-
pecting the Author.

My Book procures me favours, which my r-
will not permit me to specify, except one, whi-
dest as I am, I cannot suppress, a very handso-
ter from Dr. Franklin, at Passy—These fruit-
brought me.

I have been refreshing myself with a walk i-
den, where I find that January (who, acc-
Chaucer, was the husband of May) being
bruary has married the widow.

Yours, &c.

LETTER XXXIII.
TO JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

Olney,

Suspecting that I sh-
hinted at Dr. Franklin's encomium unde-
fluence than that of vanity, I was severa-
point of burning my letter for that ver-
not having time to write another by th-

believing that you would have the grace to pardon a little self-complacency in an Author on so trying an occasion, I let it pass. One sin naturally leads to another and a greater, and thus it happens now: for I have no way to gratify your curiosity but by transcribing the letter in question. It is addressed, by the way, not to me, but to an acquaintance of mine, who had transmitted the volume to him without my knowledge.

Passey, May 8, 1732.

"SIR,

I received the letter you did me the honour of writing to me, and am much obliged by your kind present of a book. The relish for reading of Poetry had long since left me; but there is something so new in the manner, so easy and yet so correct in the language, so clear in the expression, yet concise, and so just in the sentiments, that I have read the whole with great pleasure, and some of the pieces more than once. I beg you to accept my thankful acknowledgments, and to present my respects to the author.

Your most obedient, humble servant,

B. FRANKLIN.'

LETTER XXXIV.
To JOSEPH XILL, Esq.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Great revolutions happen in this Ant's nest of ours. One Emmet of illustrious character and great abilities pushes out another; parties are formed; they range themselves in formidable opposition; they threaten each other's ruin; they cross over, and are mingled together; and, like the corruptions of the Northern Aurora, amuse the spectator

at the same time that, by some, they are supposed to be forerunners of a general dissolution.

There are political earthquakes as well as natural ones; the former less shocking to the eye, but not always less fatal in their influence than the latter. The image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream was made up of heterogeneous and incompatible materials, and accordingly broken. Whatever is formed must expect a like catastrophe.

I have an etching of the late Chancellor hanging over the parlour chimney. I often contemplate it, and call to mind the day when I was intimate with the original. It is very like him, but he is disguised by his hat, which, though fashionable, is awkward; by his great wig, the tie of which is hardly discernable in profile; and by his band and gown, which give him an appearance clumsily sacerdotal. Our friendship is dead and buried; yours is the only surviving one of all with which I was once honoured. Adieu.

LETTER XXXV.
To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

May 26, 1783.

I feel for my uncle, and do not wonder that his loss afflicts him. A connection that has subsisted so many years could not be rent asunder without great pain to the survivor. I hope, however, and doubt not but when he had a little more time for recollection, he will find that consolation in his own family which is not the lot of every father to be blessed with. It seldom happens that married persons live together so long or so happily: but this, which one feels oneself ready to suggest as matter of alleviation, is the

very circumstance that aggravates his distress ; therefore he misses her the more, and feels that he can but ill spare her. It is, however, a necessary tax, which all who live long must pay for their longevity, to lose many whom they would be glad to detain (perhaps those in whom all their happiness is centered), and to see them step into the grave before them. In one respect at least this is a merciful appointment. When life has lost that to which it owed its principal relish, we may ourselves the more cheerfully resign it. I beg you would present him with my most affectionate remembrance, and tell him, if you think fit, how much I wish the evening of his long day may be serene and happy.

LETTER XXXVI.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

October 20, 1783.

I should not have been thus long silent, had I known with certainty where a letter of mine might find you. Your summer excursions, however, are now at an end, and addressing a line to you in the centre of the busy scene in which you spend your winter, I am pretty sure of my mark.

I see the winter approaching without much concern, though a passionate lover of fine weather, and the pleasant scenes of summer ; but the long evenings have their comforts too, and there is hardly to be found upon the earth, I suppose, so snug a creature as an Englishman by his fire-side in the winter. I mean, however, an Englishman that lives in the country, for in London it is not very easy to avoid intrusion. I have two ladies

to read to—sometimes more, but never less. At present we are circumnavigating the globe, and I find the old story with which I amused myself some years since, through the great felicity of a memory not very retentive, almost new. I am, however, sadly at a loss for Cook's Voyage: Can you send it? I shall be glad of Forster's too. These together will make the winter pass merrily, and you will much oblige me.

The last letter contains a slight sketch of those happy winter evenings which the Poet has painted so exquisitely in verse. The two ladies whom he mentions as his constant auditors were Mrs. Unwin and Lady Austen. The public, already indebted to the friendly and cheerful spirit of the latter for the pleasant Ballad of John Gilpin, had soon to thank her inspiring benevolence for a work of superior dignity, the very master-piece of Cowper's unbounded imagination!

This lady happened, as an admirer of Milton, to be partial to blank verse, and often solicited her poetical friend to try his powers in that species of composition. After repeated solicitation, he promised her, if she would furnish the subject, to comply with her request.—"O," she replied, "you can never be in want of a subject—you can write upon any—write upon this sofa!" The Poet obeyed her command, and from the lively repartee of familiar conversation arose a Poem of many thousand verses, unexampled perhaps both in its origin and its excellence! A Poem of such infinite variety, that it seems to include every subject, and every style, without any dissonance and disorder; and to have flowed, without effort, from inspired philanthropy, eager to impress upon the hearts of all readers *whatever may lead them most happily to the full en-*

nt of human life, and to the final attainment of
en.

e Task appears to have been composed in the
r of 1784. A circumstance the more remarkable,
ter was, in general, particularly unfavourable to
alth of the Poet. In the commencement of the
he marks both the season and the year, in the
address to his companion.

Whose arm this twentieth winter I perceive
Fast lock'd in mine."

ich can be the proper date of this most interest-
em, it must have been written with inconceivable
ty, for it was certainly finished very early in No-
r. This appears from the following passage
tter of the Poet to Mr. Bull, in which he not on-
tions the completion of his great work, but gives
icular account of his next production.

he Task, as you know, is gone to the press;
t went I have been employed in writing another
which I am now transcribing, and which, in a
ime, I design shall follow. It is entitled *Tiroci-*
or a Review of Schools : the business and purpose
e to censure the want of discipline, and the scan-
inattention to morals, that obtain in them ; espe-
n the largest ; and to recommend private tuition
ode of education preferable on all accounts ; to
bor fathers to become tutors to their own sons,
that is practicable ; to take home to them a do-
tutor, where it is not ; and if neither can be
to place them under the care of such a man as
whom I am writing ; some rural Parson, whose
on is limited to a few."

date of this letter (Nov. 8, 1784), and the infor-

LIFE OF COWPER.

n it contains, induce me to imagine that the Task really begun before the winter of 1784, and that passage which I have cited, as marking the æra of composition, was added in the course of a revision. The following passages from Cowper's letters to his mentioned correspondent confirm this conjecture. *August 3, 1783*—"Your sea-side situation, your beautiful prospects, your fine rides, and the sight of the alaces, which you have seen, we have not envied you; but are glad that you have enjoyed them. Why should we envy any man? Is not our green-house a cabinet of perfumes? It is at this moment fronted with carnations and balsams, with mignonette and roses, with jessamine and woodbine, and wants nothing but your pipe to make it truly Arabian;—a wilderness of sweet The Sofa is ended, but not finished; a paradox which your natural acumen, sharpened by habits of logical attention, will enable you to reconcile in a moment. I do not imagine, however, that I lounge over it—or contrary, I find it severe exercise to mould and fashion it to my mind!"

February 22, 1784—"I congratulate you on the thaw—I suppose it is an universal blessing, and is felt all over Europe. I myself am the better who wanted nothing that might make the frost more able: what reason, therefore, have they to reject being in want of all things, were exposed to more rigour?—The ice in my ink, however, is not solved—It was long before the frost seized last it prevailed—The Sofa has consequently little or no addition since—It consists at present of Books, and part of a fifth: when the sixth the work is accomplished; but if I may judge from the present inability, that period is at a constantance."

The year 1784 was a memorable period in the life of the Poet, not only as it witnessed the completion of one extensive work, and the commencement of another, (his Translation of Homer) but as it terminated his intercourse with that highly pleasing and valuable friend whose alacrity of attention and advice had induced him to engage in both.

Delightful and advantageous as his friendship with Lady Austen had proved, he now began to feel that it grew impossible to preserve that triple cord, which his own pure heart had led him to suppose not speedily to be broken. Mrs. Unwin, though by no means destitute of mental accomplishments, was eclipsed by the brilliancy of the Poet's new friend, and naturally became uneasy under the apprehension of being so ; for, to a woman of sensibility, what evil can be more afflicting than the fear of losing all mental influence over a man of genius and virtue whom she had been long accustomed to inspirit and to guide ?

Cowper perceived the painful necessity of sacrificing a great portion of his present gratifications. He felt that he must relinquish that ancient friend, whom he regarded as a venerable parent, or the new associate, whom he idolized as a sister of a heart and mind peculiarly congenial to his own. His gratitude for past services of unexampled magnitude and weight would not allow him to hesitate, and, with a resolution and delicacy that do the highest honour to his feelings, he wrote a farewell letter to Lady Austen, explaining and lamenting the circumstances that forced him to renounce the society of a friend, whose enchanting talents and kindness had proved so agreeably instrumental to the revival of his spirits, and to the exercise of his fancy.

The letters addressed to Mr. Hill at this period express, in a most pleasing manner, the sensibility of Cowper.

LETTER XXXVII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Sept. 11, 1786

I have never seen Dr. Cotton's book, concerning which your sisters question me; nor did I know, 'till you mentioned it, that he had written any thing newer than his *Visions*: I have no doubt that it is so far worthy of him as to be pious and sensible, and I believe no man living is better qualified to write on such subjects as his title seems to announce. Some years have passed since I heard from him, and, considering his great age, it is probable that I shall hear from him no more; but I shall always respect him. He is truly a philosopher, according to my judgment of the character; every tittle of his knowledge in natural subjects being connected, in his mind, with the firm belief of an Omnipotent Agent. Yours, &c. W. C.

LETTER XXXVIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

To condole with you on the death of a mother aged eighty-seven would be absurd. Rather, therefore, as is reasonable, I congratulate you on the almost singular felicity of having enjoyed the company of so amiable and so near a relation so long. Your lot and mine, in this respect, have been very different, as, indeed, in almost every other. Your mother lived to see you rise, at least to see you comfortably established in the world. Mine dying when I was six years old, did not live to see me sink in it. Y

may remember, with pleasure, while you live, a blessing vouchsafed to you so long, and I, while I live, must regret a comfort of which I was deprived so early. I can truly say that not a week passes, (perhaps I might with equal veracity say a day) in which I do not think of her. Such was the impression her tenderness made upon me, though the opportunity she had for showing it was so short. But the ways of God are equal—and when I reflect on the pangs she would have suffered had she been a witness of all mine, I see more cause to rejoice than to mourn that she was hidden in the grave so soon.

We have, as you say, lost a lively and sensible neighbour in Lady Austen; but we have been so long accustomed to a state of retirement, within one degree of solitude, and being naturally lovers of still life, can relapse into our former duality without being unhappy at the change. To me, indeed, a third is not necessary, while I can have the companion I have had these twenty years.

I am gone to the press again; a volume of mine will greet your hands some time either in the course of the winter or early in the spring. You will find it, perhaps, on the whole, more entertaining than the former, as it treats of a greater variety of subjects, and those, at least the most, of a sublunary kind. It will consist of a Poem in six books, called the *Task*. To which will be added another, which I finished yesterday, called, I believe, *Tirocinium*, on the subject of Education.

You perceive that I have taken your advice, and given the pen no rest.

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LETTER XXXIX.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

June 25, 17

DEAR FRIEND,

I write in a nook that I call *Boudoir*. It is a summer-house not much bigger than a sedan-chair, the door of which opens into a garden that is now crowded with pinks, roses and peony-suckles, and the window into my neighbour's orchard. It formerly served an apothecary, now dedicated as a smoking-room, and under my feet is a trap-door which once covered a hole in the ground, where he kept his bottles. At present, however, it is dedicated to sublimer uses. Having lined it with garden moss and furnished it with a table and two chairs, here I write all that I write in summer time, whether to friends, or to the public. It is secure from all noise and a refuge from all intrusion; for intruders sometimes trouble me in the winter evenings at Olney. Thanks to my *Boudoir*, I can now hide myself from them. A Poet's retreat is sacred: they acknowledge the truth of that proposition, and never presume to violate it.

The last sentence puts me in mind to tell you, I have ordered my volume to your door. My book is the most dilatory of all his fraternity, or you have received it long since: it is more than a year since I returned him the last proof, and consequently since the printing was finished. I sent him the script at the beginning of last November, that he might publish while the town is full, and he will hit the moment when it is entirely empty. Patience, I perceive is in no situation exempted from the trials; a remark that may serve to comfort you in the numberless trials of your own.

second volume, of whose delay in the press he so feelingly, was published in the summer of 1793, not only raised him to the summit of poetical fame, but obtained for him a blessing infinitely dear to his affectionate heart, another female friend, a literary associate, now providentially led to contribute to his comfort, when the advanced age and infirmities of Mrs. Unwin made such an acquisition of a new and rather revived friendship, a matter of infinite consequence to the tranquillity and welfare of the solitary Poet.

Already to whom I allude had the advantage of being personally related to Cowper. Their intercourse had been long and frequent, and endeared by reciprocal esteem in many years; but the whirlwinds of life had driven them far from the sight of each other. During the long retirement his fair cousin had passed some time in her husband's absence abroad, and others, after her return, in a variety of mournful duties. She was at length a widow, and her indelible regard for her departed husband, being agreeably inspirited by the publication of his recent works, she wrote to him, on that subject, a very kind letter.

It is a rise to many from him, which I am particularly happy in being enabled to make a part of this history, as they give a minute account of their author, at a very interesting period of his life; and I persuade myself they will reflect peculiarly on my departed friend in various points of view, and induce the public to join with me in thinking that his life is a rival to his Poems, in the rare excellence of its interesting life and nature with graceful and excellency.

LETTER XL.

To Lady HESKETH, New Norfolk Street, Grosvenor-Square.

October 12, 1785.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

It is no new thing with you to give pleasure, but I will venture to say that you do not often give more than you gave me this morning. When I came down to breakfast, and found upon the table a letter franked by my uncle, and when opening that frank I found that it contained a letter from you, I said within myself, this is just as it should be ; we are all grown young again, and the days that I thought I should see no more, are actually returned. You perceive therefore that you judged well when you conjectured that a line from you would not be disagreeable to me. It could not be otherwise than, as in fact it proved, a most agreeable surprize, for I can truly boast of an affection for you that neither years nor interrupted intercourse have at all abated. I need only recollect how much I valued you once, and with how much cause, immediately to feel a revival of the same value ; if that can be said to revive, which at the most has only been dormant for want of employment. But I slander it when I say that it has slept. A thousand times have I recollected a thousand scenes in which our two selves have formed the whole of the drama, with the greatest pleasure ; at times too when I had no reason to suppose that I should ever hear from you again. I have laughed with you at the Arabian Nights Entertainment, which afforded us, as you well know, a fund of merriment that deserves never to be forgot. I have walked with you to Nettleby Abbey, and have scrambled with you over hedges in every direction, and many other feats

have performed together, upon the field of my remembrance, and all within these few years, should I within this twelvemonth I should not transgress the th. The hours that I have spent with you were among the pleasantest of my former days, and are therefore chronicled in my mind so deeply as to fear no sure. Neither do I forget my poor friend Sir Thomas: I should remember him indeed at any rate on account of his personal kindnesses to myself, but the last testimony that he gave of his regard for you, endears it to me still more. With his uncommon understanding (for with many peculiarities he had more sense than any of his acquaintance) and with his generous sensibilities, it was hardly possible that he should not distinguish you as he has done: as it was the last, so it is the best proof that he could give of a judgment that never deceived him, when he would allow himself leisure to consult it.

You say that you have often heard of me: that puzzles me. I cannot imagine from what quarter; but it no matter. I must tell you, however, my Cousin, that your information has been a little defective. That I am happy in my situation is true: I live and have lived these twenty years with Mrs. Unwin, to whose affectionate care of me during the far greater part of that time, it is, under Providence, owing that I live at

But I do not account myself happy in having been thirteen of those years in a state of mind that has demanded all that care and attention necessary: an attention and a care that have injured her health, and which, had she not been uncommonly supported, must have brought her to the grave. But I will pass to another subject; it would be cruel to particularize only to give pain; neither would I by any means give a sable

hue to the first letter of a correspondence so unexpectedly renewed.

I am delighted with what you tell me of my uncle's good health; to enjoy any measure of cheerfulness at so late a day is much, but to have that late day enlivened with the vivacity of youth, is much more, and in these postdiluvian times a rarity indeed. Happy, for the most part, are parents who have daughters. Daughters are not apt to outlive their natural affections, which a son has generally survived even before his boyish years are expired. I rejoice particularly in my uncle's felicity, who has three female descendants from his little person, who leave him nothing to wish for upon that head.

My dear Cousin, dejection of spirits, which I suppose may have prevented many a man from becoming an Author, made me one. I find constant employment necessary, and therefore take care to be constantly employed. Manual occupations do not engage the mind sufficiently, as I know by experience, having tried many: but composition, especially of verse, absorbs it wholly. I write therefore generally three hours in a morning, and in an evening I transcribe. I read also, but less than I write, for I must have bodily exercise, and therefore never pass a day without it.

You ask me where I have been this summer. I answer at Olney. Should you ask me where I spent the last seventeen summers, I should still answer at Olney. Ay, and the winters also. I have seldom left it, and except when I attended my brother in his last illness, never I believe a fortnight together.

Adieu, my beloved Cousin: I shall not always be thus nimble in reply, but shall always have a great pleasure in answering you when I can.

Yours, my Friend and Cousin,

WM. COWPER.

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LETTER XLI.
To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, Nov. 9, 1785.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Whose last most affectionate letter has run in my head ever since I received it, and which I now sit down to answer two days sooner than the post will serve me. I thank you for it, and with a warmth for which I am sure you will give me credit, though I do not spend many words in describing it. I do not seek *new* friends, not being altogether sure that I should find them, but have unspeakable pleasure in being still beloved by an old one. I hope that now our correspondence has suffered its last interruption, and that we shall go down together to the grave chatting and chirping as merrily as such a scene of things as this will permit.

I am happy that my Poems have pleased you. My volume has afforded me no such pleasure at any time, either while I was writing it, or since its publication, as I have derived from yours and my uncle's opinion of it. I make certain allowances for partiality, and for that peculiar quickness of taste with which you both relish what you like, and after all draw-backs upon those accounts duly made, find myself rich in the measure of your approbation that still remains. But above all I honour John Gilpin, since it was he who first encouraged you to write. I made him on purpose to laugh at, and he served his purpose well; but I am now in debt to him for a more valuable acquisition than all the laughter in the world amounts to, the recovery of my intercourse with you, which is to me inestimable. My

benevolent and generous Cousin, when I was once asked if I wanted any thing, and given delicately enough to understand that the enquirer was ready to supply all my occasions, I thankfully and civilly, but positively declined the favour. I neither suffer, nor have suffered any such inconveniences as I had not much rather endure, than come under obligations of that sort to a person comparatively with yourself a stranger to me. But to you I answer otherwise. I know you thoroughly, and the liberality of your disposition; and have that consummate confidence in the sincerity of your wish to serve me, that delivers me from all awkward constraint, and from all fear of trespassing by acceptance. To you, therefore, I reply, yes; whensoever, and whatsoever, and in what manner soever you please; and add, moreover, that my affection for the giver is such as will increase to me tenfold the satisfaction that I shall have in receiving. It is necessary, however, that I should let you a little into the state of my finances, that you may not suppose them more narrowly circumscribed than they are. Since Mrs. Unwin and I have lived at Olney, we have had but one purse; although, during the whole of that time, till lately, her income was nearly double mine. Her revenues, indeed, are now in some measure reduced, and do not much exceed my own: the worst consequence of this is, that we are forced to deny ourselves some things which hitherto we have been better able to afford; but they are such things as neither life nor the well-being of life depend upon. My own income has been better than it is, but when it was best, it would not have enabled me to live as my connections demanded that I should, had it not been combined with a better than itself, at least at this end of the kingdom.

Of this, I had full proof during three months that I spent in lodgings at Huntingdon, in which time, by the help of good management, and a clear notion of æconomical matters, I contrived to spend the income of a twelve-month. Now, my beloved Cousin, you are in possession of the whole case as it stands. Strain no points to your own inconvenience or hurt, for there is no need of it; but indulge yourself in communicating (no matter what) that you can spare without missing it, since by so doing you will be sure to add to the comforts of my life, one of the sweetest that I can enjoy, a token and proof of your affection.

In the affairs of my next publication, toward which you also offer me so kindly your assistance, there will be no need that you should help me in the manner that you propose. It will be a large work, consisting, I should imagine, of six volumes at least. The twelfth of this month I shall have spent a year upon it, and it will cost me more than another. I do not love the booksellers well enough to make them a present of such a labour, but intend to publish by subscription. Your vote and interest, my dear Cousin, upon the occasion, if you please, but nothing more! I will trouble you with some papers of proposals, when the time shall come, and am sure that you will circulate as many for me as you can. Now, my dear, I am going to tell you a secret. It is a great secret, that you must not whisper even to your cat. No creature is at this moment apprised of it, but Mrs. Unwin and her Son. I am making a new translation of Homer, and am upon the point of finishing the twenty-first book of the Iliad. The reasons upon which I undertake this Herculean labour, and by which I justify an enterprize in which I seem so effectually anticipated by Pope, although, in fact, he has not anticipated me at all, I may possibly

give you, if you wish for them, when I can find more interesting to say ; a period which I conceive to be very near ; I have not answered things in your letter, nor can do it at present for want of room. I cannot believe but that I should notwithstanding all that time may have done is not a feature of your face, could I meet you on the road by itself, that I should not instantly recognize you. I should say, that is my Cousin's nose, or those lips and her chin, and no woman upon earth resembles them but herself. As for me, I am a very young man of my years. I am not indeed grown grey ; I am grown bald. No matter. There was never a man in the world than ever had the honour to be bald. Accordingly, having found just enough to do to fill at my ears, and to intermix with a little of the hair that still hangs behind, I appear, if you see me in the afternoon, to have a very decent head-dress distinguished from my natural growth ; and my hair worn by a small bag, and a black ribbon round my neck, continues to me the charms of my youth on the verge of age. Away with the fear of old age too often.

Yours, my dearest Cousin

P. S. That the view I give you of my life is not complete, I add the two following items—That I owe no debt to nobody, and that I grow fat.

LETTER XLII.

To Lady HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

I am glad that I have loved you as I did. It releases me from any

suspect that my present affection for you is indebted for its existence to any selfish considerations. No. I am sure I love you disinterestedly, and for your own sake, because I never thought of you with any other sensations than those of the truest affection, even when I was under the influence of a persuasion, that I should never hear from you again. But with my present feelings, superadded to those that I always had for you, I find it no easy matter to do justice to my sensations. I perceive myself in a state of mind similar to that of the traveller, described in Pope's *Messiah*, who, as he passes through a sandy desert, starts at the sudden and unexpected sound of a waterfall. You have placed me in a situation new to me, and in which I feel myself somewhat puzzled how I ought to behave. At the same time that I would not grieve you by putting a check upon your bounty, I would be as careful not to abuse it, as if I were a miser, and the question not about your money but my own.

Although I do not suspect that a secret to you, my cousin, is any burthen, yet having maturely considered that point since I wrote my last, I feel myself altogether disposed to release you from the injunction to that effect under which I laid you. I have now made such a progress in my translation, that I need neither fear that I shall stop short of the end, nor that any other rider of Pegasus should overtake me. Therefore, if at any time it should fall fairly in your way, or you should feel yourself invited to say that I am so occupied, you have my Poetship's free permission. Dr. Johnson read and recommended my first volume.

W. C.

LETTER XLIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

Dec. 24, 1785.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

'Till I had made such a progress in my present undertaking as to put it out of all doubt that, if I lived, I should proceed in and finish it, I kept the matter to myself. It would have done me little honour to have told my friends that I had an arduous enterprize in hand, if afterwards I must have told them that I had dropped it. Knowing it to have been universally the opinion of the literati, ever since they have allowed themselves to consider the matter coolly, that a translation, properly so called, of Homer, is, notwithstanding what Pope has done, a desideratum in the English language, it struck me that an attempt to supply the deficiency would be an honourable one; and having made myself, in former years, somewhat critically a master of the original, I was, by this double consideration, induced to make the attempt myself. I am now translating into blank verse the last book of the Iliad, and mean to publish by subscription.

W. C.

LETTER XLIV.

To Lady HESKETH.

Jan. 10, 1786.

It gave me great pleasure that you found my friend Unwin, what I was sure you would find him, a most agreeable man. I did not usher him

in with the marrow-bones and cleavers of high-sounding panegyric, both because I was certain that whatsoever merit he had, your discernment would mark it, and because it is possible to do a man material injury, by making his praise his harbinger. It is easy to raise expectation to such a pitch that the reality, be it ever so excellent, must necessarily fall below it.

I hold myself much indebted to Mr. —, of whom I have the first information from yourself, both for his friendly dispositions towards me, and for the manner in which he marks the defects in my volume. An author must be tender indeed, to wince on being touched so gently. It is undoubtedly as he says, and as you and my uncle say. You cannot be all mistaken, neither is it at all probable that any of you should be so. I take it for granted, therefore, that there are inequalities in the composition; and I do assure you, my dear, most faithfully, that if it should reach a second edition, I will spare no pains to improve it. It may serve me for an agreeable amusement, perhaps, when Homer shall be gone and done with. The first edition of poems has generally been susceptible of improvement. Pope, I believe, never published one in his life, that did not undergo variations, and his longest pieces many. I will only observe, that inequalities there must be always, and in every work of length. There are level parts of every subject, parts which we cannot, with propriety, attempt to elevate. They are by nature humble, and can only be made to assume an awkward and uncouth appearance by being mounted. But again, I take it for granted that this remark does not apply to the matter of your objection. You were sufficiently aware of it before, and have no need that I should suggest it as an apology, could it have served that office, but would have made it for me yourself. In truth, my dear, had

you known in what anguish of mind I wrote the whole of that poem, and under what perpetual interruption from a cause that has since been removed, so that sometimes I had not an opportunity of writing more than three lines at a sitting, you would long since have wondered as much I do myself, that it turned out as thing better than Grub-street.

My cousin, give yourself no trouble to find out any the Magi to scrutinize my Homer. I can do without them; and if I were not conscious that I have no need of their help, I would be the first to call for it. Assure yourself that I intend to be careful to the utmost line of all possible caution, both with respect to language and versification. I will not send a verse to the press, that shall not have undergone the strictest examination.

A subscription is surely on every account the most eligible mode of publication. When I shall have emptied the purses of my friends and of their friends into my own, I am still free to levy contributions upon the world at large, and I shall then have a fund to defray the expenses of a new edition. I have ordered Johnson to print the proposals immediately, and hope that they will kiss your hands before the week is expired.

I have had the kindest letter from Josephus that I ever had. He mentioned my purpose to one of the masters of Eton, who replied, that "such a work is much wanted."

W. C.

LETTER XLV.
To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, Jan. 31, 1786.

It is very pleasant, my dearest cousin, to receive a present so delicately conveyed as

that which I received so lately from Anonymous, but it is also very painful to have nobody to thank for it. I find myself, therefore, driven by stress of necessity to the following resolution, viz. that I will constitute you my Thank-receiver-general, for whatsoever gift I shall receive hereafter, as well as for those that I have already received from a nameless benefactor. I therefore thank you, my cousin, for a most elegant present, including the most elegant compliment that ever Poet was honoured with; for a snuff-box of tortoise-shell, with a beautiful landscape on the lid of it, glazed with chrystal, having the figures of three hares in the foreground, and inscribed above with the words, *The Peasant's Nest*, and below with these, *Tiney, Puss, and Bess*. For all, and every of these, I thank you, and also for standing proxy on this occasion. Nor must I forget to thank you, that so soon after I had sent you the first letter of Anonymous, I received another in the same hand. There—now I am a little easier.

I have almost conceived a design to send up half a dozen stout country-fellows, to tie by the leg to their respective bed-posts, the company that so abridges your opportunity of writing to me. Your letters are the joy of my heart, and I cannot endure to be robbed by, I know not whom, of half my treasure. But there is no comfort without a drawback, and therefore it is that I, who have unknown friends, have unknown enemies also. Ever since I wrote last, I find myself in better health, and my nocturnal spasms and fever considerably abated. I intend to write to Dr. Kerr on Thursday, that I may gratify him with an account of my amendment; for to him I know it will be a gratification. Were he not a physician, I should regret that he lives so distant, for he is a most agreeable man; but being what he is, it would be impossible to have his company,

even if he were a neighbour, unless in time of sickness at which time whatever charms he might have in himself, my own must necessarily lose much of their effect on him.

When I write to you, my dear, what I have already related to the General, I am always fearful I should tell you that for news with which you are acquainted. For once, however, I will venture. Wednesday last I received from Johnson the manuscript copy of a specimen that I had sent to the General, and inclosed in the same cover notes upon it to an unknown critic. Johnson, in a short letter, recommended him to me as a man of unquestionable learning and ability. On perusal and consideration of his remarks I found him such, and having nothing so much at heart as to give all possible security to yourself and the General, that my work shall not come forth unfinished, I answered Johnson, "that I would gladly submit my manuscript to his friend." He is, in truth, a very close fellow, perfectly a stranger to me, and one who, I promise you, will not spare for severity of animadversion where he shall find occasion. It is impossible for my dearest cousin, to express a wish that I do not equally feel a wish to gratify. You are desirous Maty should see a book of my Homer, and for that reason, if Maty *will* see a book of it, he shall be allowed to come, although time is likely to be precious; and, consequently, any delay that is not absolutely necessary, much as possible, to be avoided. I am now revising the Iliad; it is a business that will cost me four months perhaps five, for I compare the very words as they stand, and if much alteration should occur, must transcribe the whole. The first book I have almost transcribed already. To these five months, Johnson says that more must be added for printing, and, upon my

experience, I will venture to assure you, that the tardiness of printers will make those nine months twelve. There is danger, therefore, that my subscribers may think that I make them wait too long, and that they who know me not may suspect a bubble. How glad I shall be to read it over in an evening, book by book, as fast as I settle the copy, to you, and to Mrs. Unwin! She has been my touchstone always, and without reference to her taste and judgment, I have printed nothing. With one of you at each elbow, I should think myself the happiest of all poets.

The General and I, having broken the ice, are upon the most comfortable terms of correspondence. He writes very affectionately to me, and I say every thing that comes uppermost. I could not write frequently to any creature living upon any other terms than those. He tells me of infirmities that he has, which make him less active than he was. I am sorry to hear that he has any such. Alas! alas! he was young when I saw him only twenty years ago.

I have the most affectionate letter imaginable from Colman, who writes to me like a brother. The Chancellor is yet dumb.

May God have you in his keeping, my beloved cousin. Farewell.

W. C.

LETTER XLVI.
To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, Feb. 9, 1786.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

I have been impatient to tell you, that I am impatient to see you again. Mrs. Un-

win partakes with me in all my feelings upon this subject, and longs also to see you. I should have told you so by the last post, but have been so completely occupied by this tormenting specimen, that it was impossible to do it. I sent the General a letter on Monday, that would distress and alarm him: I sent him another yesterday, that will, I hope, quiet him again. Johnson has apologized very civilly for the multitude of his friend's strictures, and his friend has promised to confine himself in future to a comparison of me with the original, so that I doubt not we shall jog on merrily together. And now, my dear, let me tell you once more, that your kindness in promising us a visit has charmed us both. I shall see you again—I shall hear your voice; we shall take walks together; I will show you my prospects, the hovel, the alcove, the Ouse and its banks, every thing that I have described. I anticipate the pleasure of those days not very far distant, and feel a part of it at this moment. Talk not of an inn, mention it not for your life. We have never had so many visitors but we could easily accommodate them all, though we have received Unwin, and his wife, and his sister, and his son, all at once. My dear, I will not let you come till the end of May, or beginning of June, because before that time my green-house will not be ready to receive us, and it is the only pleasant room belonging to us. When the plants go out, we go in. I line it with mats, and spread the floor with mats, and there you shall sit with a bed of mignonette at your side, and a hedge of honey-suckles, roses and jessamine; and I will make you a bouquet of myrtle every day. Sooner than the time I mention, the country will not be in complete beauty. And I will tell you what you shall find at your first entrance. Imprimis, as soon as you have *entered* the vestibule, if you cast a look on either side

u, you shall see on the right hand a box of my making. It is the box in which have been lodged all my books, and in which lodges Puss at present. But he, my fellow, is worn out with age, and promises to die ere you can see him. On the right hand stands a sideboard, the work of the same author. It was once a cabinet, but I transformed it. Opposite to you stands a table which I also made, but a merciless servant having scrubbed it until it became paralytic, it serves no purpose now but of ornament, and all my shoes stand under it. On the left hand, at the farther end of this superb vestibule, you find the door to my parlour, into which I will conduct you, and where I will introduce you to Mrs. Unwin, (unless we should meet her before), and where we will be as happy as the day is long. Order yourself, my cousin, to the Swan River wharf, and there you shall find me ready to convey you to Olney.

My dear, I have told Homer what you say about the cask and urns, and have asked him whether he is sure it is a cask in which Jupiter keeps his wine. He says that it is a cask, and that it will never be any other than a cask to eternity. So if the god is content with it, we must even wonder at his taste, and be so contented.

Adieu, my dearest cousin.

W. C.

LETTER XLVII.

To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, Feb. 11, 1786.

DEAREST COUSIN,

It must be, I suppose, a fortnight or thereabout, since I wrote last, I feel myself so alert

and so ready to write again. Be that as it may, here I come. We talk of nobody but you : what we will do with you, when we get you ; where you shall walk, where you shall sleep ; in short, every thing that bears the remotest relation to your well-being at Olney, occupies all our talking time, which is all that I do not spend at Troy.

I have every reason for writing to you as often as I can, but I have a particular reason for doing it now. I want to tell you that by the Diligence on Wednesday next I mean to send you a quire of my Homer for Maty's perusal. It will contain the first book, and as much of the second as brings us to the catalogue of the ships, and is every morsel of the revised copy that I have transcribed. My dearest cousin, read it yourself—Let the General read it. Do what you please with it, so that it reach Johnson in due time ; but let Maty be the only *Critic* that has any thing to do with it. The vexation, the perplexity that attends a multiplicity of criticisms by various hands, many of which are sure to be futile, many of them ill-founded, and some of them contradictory to others, is inconceivable, except by the author whose ill-fated work happens to be the subject of them. This also appears to me self-evident ; that if a work have past under the review of one man of taste and learning, and have had the good fortune to please him, his approbation gives security for that of all others qualified like himself. I speak thus, my dear, after having just escaped from such a storm of trouble, occasioned by endless remarks, hints, suggestions, and objections, as drove me almost to despair, and to the very edge of a resolution to drop my undertaking for ever. With infinite difficulty I, at last, sifted the chaff from the wheat, availed myself of what appeared to me to be just, and rejected the rest ; but

not till the labour and anxiety had nearly undone all that Kerr had been doing for me. My beloved cousin, trust me for it, as you safely may, that temper, vanity and self-importance had nothing to do in all this distress that I suffered. It was merely the effect of an alarm that I could not help taking, when I compare the great trouble I had with a few lines only, thus handled, with that which I foresaw such handling of the whole must necessarily give me. I felt before-hand that my constitution would not bear it. I shall send up this second specimen in a box that I have had made on purpose; and when Maty has done with the copy, and you have done with it yourself, then you must return it in said box to my translatorship. Though Johnson's friend has teased me sadly, I verily believe that I shall have no more such cause to complain of him. We now understand one another, and I firmly believe that I might have gone the world through, before I had found his equal in an accurate and familiar acquaintance with the original.

A letter to Mr. Urban, in the last Gentleman's Magazine, of which I's book is the subject, pleases me more than any thing I have seen in the way of eulogium yet. I have no guess of the author.

I do not wish to remind the Chancellor of his promise. Ask you why, my cousin? Because, I suppose, it would be impossible. He has, no doubt, forgotten it entirely, and would be obliged to take my word for the truth of it, which I could not bear. We drank tea together with Mrs. C——e and her sister, in King's-street, Bloomsbury, and there was the promise made. I said, Thurlow, I am nobody, and you will be Chancellor: you shall provide for me when you are. He smiled and replied, I surely will. These ladies, said I, are witnesses. He still smiled, and said, let them be so.

for I will certainly do it. But alas ! twenty-four years have passed since the day of the date thereof, and to mention it now would be to upbraid him with inattention to his plighted troth. Neither do I suppose he could easily serve such a creature as I am if he would.

Adieu, whom I love entirely.

W. C.

LETTER XLVIII.
To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, Feb. 19, 1786.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Since so it must be, so it shall be. If you will not sleep under the roof of a friend, may you never sleep under the roof of an enemy. An enemy, however you will not presently find. Mrs. Unwin bids me mention her affectionately, and tell you, that she willingly gives up a part for the sake of the rest, willingly, at least as far as willingly may consist with some reluctance: I feel my reluctance too. Our design was, that you should have slept in the room that serves me for a study, and its having been occupied by you would have been an additional recommendation of it to me. But all reluctances are superseded by the thought of seeing you; and because we have nothing so much at heart as the wish to see you happy and comfortable, we are desirous, therefore, to accommodate you to your own mind, and not to ours. Mrs. Unwin has already secured for you an apartment, or rather two, just such as we could wish. The house in which you will find them is within thirty yards of our own, and opposite to it. The whole affair is thus commodiously adjusted; and now I have nothing to do but

to wish for June, and June, my cousin, was never so wished for since June was made. I shall have a thousand things to hear, and a thousand to say, and they will all rush into my mind together, till it will be so crowded with things impatient to be said, that for some time I shall say nothing. But no matter—Sooner or later they will all come out; and since we shall have you the longer, for not having you under our own roof, (a circumstance that more than any thing reconciles us to that measure) they will stand the better chance. After so long a separation, a separation that, of late, seemed likely to last for life, we shall meet each other, as alive from the dead; and, for my own part, I can truly say, that I have not a friend in the other world whose resurrection would give me greater pleasure.

I am truly happy, my dear, in having pleased you with what you have seen of my Homer. I wish that all English readers had your unsophisticated, or rather unadulterated taste, and could relish simplicity like you. But I am well aware that in this respect I am under a disadvantage, and that many, especially many ladies, missing many turns and prettinesses of expression that they have admired in Pope, will account my translation in those particulars defective. But I comfort myself with the thought, that in reality it is no defect; on the contrary, that the want of all such embellishments as do not belong to the original, will be one of its principal merits with persons indeed capable of relishing Homer. He is the best Poet that ever lived for many reasons, but for none more than for that majestic plainness that distinguishes him from all others. As an accomplished person moves gracefully without thinking of it, in like manner the dignity of Homer seems to cost him no labour. It was natural to him to say great things, and to say them well, and little orna-

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were beneath his notice. If Maty, my dearest, should return to you my copy with any such notes as may make it necessary for me to see it before it goes to Johnson, in that case you shall give it to me; otherwise to Johnson immediately: for I write me word he wishes his friend to go to work as soon as possible. When you come, my dear, I will hang all these critics together, for they have injured me without remorse or conscience, at least one of them has: I had actually murdered more than a hundred of the best lines in the specimen, in compliance with his requisitions, but plucked up my courage at last, and in the very last opportunity that I had, restored them to life again by restoring the original reading. At the same time I readily confess that the specimen is the better for all this discipline its author has undergone; but then it has been more indebted for its improvement to that pointed accuracy of examination, to which I was myself excited, than to any proposed amendments from Mr. Critic; for as sure as you are my cousin, whom I long to see at Olney, so sure would he have done me irreparable mischief, if I would have given him leave.

My friend Bagot writes to me in a most friendly strain, and calls loudly upon me for original poetry. When I shall have done with Homer, probably he will not call in vain; having found the prime feathered swan on the banks of the *snug and silver Trent*. Adieu, dear cousin.

I am sorry that the General has such indelible health. He must not die. I can by no means person so kind to me.

LETTER XLIX.
To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, March 6, 1786.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Your opinion has more weight with me than that of all the critics in the world, and to give you a proof of it, I make you a concession that I would hardly have made to them all united. I do not indeed, absolutely covenant, promise, and agree, that I will discard *all* my elisions, but I hereby bind myself to dismiss *as many* of them, as, without sacrificing energy to sound, I can. It is incumbent upon me, in the mean time, to say something in justification of the few that I shall retain, that I may not seem a Poet mounted rather on a mule than on Pegasus. In the first place, *The*, is a barbarism. We are indebted for it to the Celts, or the Goths, or to the Saxons, or perhaps to them all. In the two best languages that ever were spoken, the Greek and the Latin, there is no similar incumbrance of expression to be found. Secondly, the perpetual use of it in our language is, to us miserable poets, attended with two great inconveniences. Our verse consisting only of ten syllables, it not unfrequently happens, that the fifth part of a line is to be engrossed, and necessarily too, (unless elision prevents it) by this abominable intruder; and which is worse in my account, open vowels are continually the consequence:—*The* element—*The* air, &c. Thirdly, the French, who are equally with the English chargeable with barbarism in this particular, dispose of their *Le* and their *La* without ceremony, and always take care that they shall be absorbed, both in verse and in prose, in the vowel that immediately follows them. Fourthly, and I believe lastly, (and for your sake I wish it may prove so) the

practice of cutting short a *The* is warranted by who, of all English poets that ever lived, had the finest ear. Dr. Warton indeed has dared that he had a bad one, for which he deserves, a critical demerit can deserve it, to lose his thought I had done, but there is still a fifthly and it is this; that the custom of abbreviating *The* longs to the style in which, in my advertisement annexed to the specimen, I profess to write. That that style would have warranted me in the practice much greater liberty of this sort than I ever intended. In perfect consistence with that style I say I' th' tempest, I' th' door-way, &c. which ever, I would not allow myself to do, because aware that it would be objected to, and with. But it seems to me, for the causes above said when I shorten *The*, before a vowel, or before in the line you mention,

“ Than th' whole broad Hellespont in all his

my licence is not equally exceptionable. Because though he rank as a consonant in the word *whole* allowed to announce himself to the ear, and *H* is pirate. But as I said at the beginning, so say I am most willing to conform myself to your very able observation, that it is necessary, if we would to consult the taste of our own day. Neither have I pelted you, my dearest cousin, with any of this volley of good reasons, had I not designed to give an answer to those objections which you say you heard from others. But I only mention them. If satisfactory to myself, I wave them, and will allow *The* his whole dimensions, whensoever it can be

Thou only Critic of my verse that is to be for all the earth whom I love, what shall I say in answer to your own objection to that passage—

“ Softly he placed his hand
“ On th’ old man’s hand, and push’d it gently away.”

I can say neither more nor less than this, that when our dear friend the General sent me his opinion of the specimen, quoting those very words from it, he added, “ With this part I was particularly pleased: there is nothing in poetry more descriptive.” Such were his very words. Taste, my dear, is various; there is nothing so various, and even between persons of the best taste there are diversities of opinion on the same subject, for which it is not possible to account. So much for these matters.

You advise me to consult the General, and to confide in him. I follow your advice, and have done both. By the last post I asked his permission to send him the Books of my Homer, as fast as I should finish them off. I shall be glad of his remarks, and more glad than of any thing, to do that which I hope may be agreeable to him. They will of course pass into your hands before they are sent to Johnson. The quire that I sent is now in the hands of Johnson’s friend. I intended to have told you in my last, but forgot it, that Johnson behaves very handsomely in the affair of my two volumes. He acts with a liberality not often found in persons of his occupation, and to mention it when occasion calls me to it, is a justice due to him.

I am very much pleased with Mr. Stanley’s letter—several compliments were paid me on the subject of that first volume by my own friends, but I do not recollect that I ever knew the opinion of a stranger about it before, whether favourable or otherwise: I only heard by a side wind that it was very much read in Scotland, and more than here.

Farewell, my dearest cousin, whom we expect, of whom we talk continually, and whom we continually long for.

W. C.

Your anxious wishes for my success delight me, and you may rest assured, my dear, that I have all the ambition on the subject that you can wish me to feel. I more than admire my author. I often stand astonished at his beauties. I am for ever amused with the translation of him, and I have received a thousand encouragements. These are all so many nappy omens that, I hope, shall be verified by the event.

LETTER L.
To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

April 5, 1786.

I did, as you suppose, bestow all possible consideration on the subject of an apology for my Homeric undertaking. I turned the matter about in my mind an hundred different ways, and in every way in which it would present itself, found it an impracticable business. It is impossible for me, with what delicacy soever I manage it, to state the objections that lie against Pope's translation, without incurring odium, and the imputation of arrogance : foreseeing this danger, I choose to say nothing.

W. C.

P. S. You may well wonder at my courage, who have undertaken a work of such enormous length. You would wonder more if you knew that I translated the whole Iliad with no other help than a Clavis. But I have since equipped myself better for this immense journey, and am revising the work in company with a good commentator.

LETTER LI.
To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, April 17, 1786.

If you will not quote Solomon, my dearest cousin, I will. He says, and as beautifully as truly—"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life!" I feel how much reason he had on his side when he made this observation, and am myself sick of your fortnight's delay.

* * * * *

The Vicarage was built by Lord Dartmouth, and was not finished till some time after we arrived at Olney; consequently it is new. It is a smart stone building, well sashed, by much too good for the living, but just what I would wish for you. It has, as you justly concluded from my premises, a garden, but rather calculated for use than ornament. It is square, and well walled, but has neither arbour nor alcove, nor other shade, except the shadow of the house. But we have two gardens, which are yours. Between your mansion and ours is interposed nothing but an orchard, into which a door, opening out of our garden, affords us the easiest communication imaginable, will save the round about by the town, and make both houses one. Your chamber windows look over the river, and over the meadows, to a village called Emberton, and command the whole length of a long bridge, described by a certain Poet, together with a view of the road at a distance. Should you wish for books at Olney, you must bring them with you, or you will wish in vain; for I have none but the works of a certain Poet, Cowper, of whom, perhaps, you have heard, and they are as yet but two volumes. They

may multiply hereafter, but at present they are more.

You are the first person for whom I have heard Unwin express such feelings as she does for you: is not profuse in professions, nor forward to enter treaties of friendship with new faces; but her friendship is once engaged, it may be trusted in even unto death. She loves you already how much more will she love you before the twelvemonth! I have indeed endeavoured to draw you to her; but perfectly as I have you by heart, sensible that my picture cannot do you justice: I saw one that did. Be you what you may, you are beloved, and will be so at Olney; and Mrs. Unwin expects you with the pleasure that one feels at the return of a long absent, dear relation; that is to say a pleasure such as mine. She sends you her warm affections.

On Friday I received a letter from dear Anon apprising me of a parcel that the coach would bring me on Saturday. Who is there in the world that does not think he has reason to love me to the degree he does? But it is no matter. He chooses to be known, and his choice is and ever shall be so satisfactory to me, that if his name lay on the table before me, I would not turn the paper about that I might read it. Much as it would gratify me to thank him, I would turn my eyes away from the forbidden display. I long to assure him that those same eyes, which he expresses such kind apprehension lest should suffer by this laborious undertaking, are as I could expect them to be, if I were never to write either book or pen. Subject to weakness, and occasional slight inflammations, it is probable that they will always be; but I cannot remember the time when I enjoyed any thing so like an exemption from them.

firmities as at present. One would almost suppose that reading Homer were the best opthalmic in the world. I should be happy to remove his solicitude on the subject, but it is a pleasure that he will not let me enjoy. Well, then, I will be content without it; and so content, that though I believe you, my dear, to be in full possession of all this mystery, you shall never know me while you live, either directly, or by hints of any sort, attempt to extort or steal the secret from you. I should think myself as justly punishable as the Bethshemites, for looking into the ark which they were not allowed to touch.

I have not sent for Kerr, for Kerr can do nothing but send me to Bath, and to Bath I cannot go for a thousand reasons. The summer will set me up again; I grow fat every day, and shall be as big as Gog, or Magog, or both put together, before you come.

I did actually live three years with Mr. Chapman, a Solicitor, that is to say, I slept three years in his house, but I lived, that is to say, I spent my days, in Southampton-Row, as you very well remember. There was I, and the future Lord Chancellor, constantly employed, from morning to night, in giggling, and making giggle, instead of studying the law. O fie, cousin, how could you do so? I am pleased about Lord Thurlow's enquiries about me. If he takes it into that inimitable head of his, he may make a man of me yet. I could love him heartily, if he would but deserve it at my hands. That I did so once, is certain. The Dutchess of —, who in the world set her agoing? But if all the Dutchesses in the world were spinning, like so many whirligigs, for my benefit, I would not stop them. It is a noble thing to be a Poet, it makes all the world so lively. I might have preached more sermons than

even Tillotson did, and better, and the world would have been still fast asleep; but a volume of verse is a fiddle that puts the universe in motion.

W. C.

LETTER LII.
To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, April 24, 1786.

Your letters are so much my comfort that I often tremble least by any accident I should be disappointed; and the more, because you have been, more than once, so engaged in company on the writing day, that I have had a narrow escape. Let me give you a piece of good counsel, my cousin: Follow my laudable example—write when you can—take time's forelock in one hand, and a pen in the other, and so make sure of your opportunity. It is well for me that you write faster than any body, and more in an hour than other people in two, else I know not what would become of me. When I read your letters I hear you talk, and I love talking letters dearly, especially from you. Well, the middle of June will not always be a thousand years off, and when it comes I shall hear you, and see you too, and shall not care a farthing then if you do not touch a pen in a month. By the way, you must either send me or bring me some more paper, for before the moon shall have performed a few more revolutions, I shall not have a scrap left; and tedious revolutions they are just now, that is certain.

I give you leave to be as peremptory as you please, especially at a distance; but when you say that you are a Cowper, (and the better it is for the Cowpers that such you are, and I givethem joy of you with all my

heart) you must not forget that I boast myself a Cowper too, and have my humours, and fancies, and determinations, as well as others of my name, and hold them as fast as they can. *You* indeed tell *me* how often I shall see you when you come. A pretty story truly. I am a *He* Cowper, my dear, and claim the privileges that belong to my noble sex. But these matters shall be settled, as my cousin Agamemnon used to say, at a more convenient time.

I shall rejoice to see the letter your promise me ; for though I met with a morsel of praise last week, I do not know that the week current is likely to produce me any ; and having lately been pretty much pampered with that diet, I expect to find myself rather hungry by the time when your next letter shall arrive. It will therefore be very opportune. The morsel above alluded to came from—whom do you think ? From — ; but she desires that her authorship may be a secret. And in my answer I promised not to divulge it, except to you. It is a pretty copy of verses neatly written, and well turned, and when you come you shall see them. I intend to keep all pretty things to myself till then, that they may serve me as a bait to lure you hither more effectually. The last letter that I had from —, I received so many years since, that it seems as if it had reached me a good while before I was born.

I was grieved at the heart that the General could not come, and that illness was in part the cause that hindered him. I have sent him, by his express desire, a new edition of the first book, and half the second. He would not suffer me to send it to you, my dear, least you should post it away to Maty at once. He did not give that reason, but being shrewd, I found it.

The grass begins to grow, and the leaves to bud, and

every thing is preparing to be beautiful against you come. Adieu.

W. C.

You inquire of our walks, I perceive, as well as our rides. They are beautiful. You inquire also concerning a cellar. You have two cellars. Oh! what years have passed since we took the same walks, and drank out of the same bottle! but a few more weeks and then!

LETTER LIII.
To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, May 8, 1786.

I did not at all doubt that your tenderness for my feelings had inclined you to suppress in your letters to me the intelligence concerning Maty's critique, that yet reached me from another quarter. When I wrote to you I had not learned it from the General, but from my friend Bull, who only knew it by hear-say. The next post brought me the news of it from the first mentioned, and the critique itself inclosed. Together with it came also a squib discharged against me in the Public Advertiser. The General's letter found me in one of my most melancholy moods, and my spirits did not rise on the receipt of it. The letter, indeed, that he had cut from the newspaper gave me little pain, both because it contained nothing formidable, though written with malevolence enough, and because a nameless author can have no more weight with his readers than the reason which he has on his side can give him. But Maty's animadversions hurt me more. In part they appeared to me unjust, and in part ill-natured; and yet the man himself

being an oracle in every body's account, I apprehended that he had done me much mischief. Why he says that the translation is far from exact, is best known to himself: for I know it to be as exact as is compatible with poetry; and prose translations of Homer are not wanted; the world has one already. But I will not fill my letter to you with hypercriticisms; I will only add an extract from a letter of Colman's, that I received last Friday, and will then dismiss the subject. It came accompanied by a copy of the specimen, which he himself had amended, and with so much taste and candour that it charmed me. He says **the** follows:

“One copy I have returned, with some remarks, prompted by my zeal for your success; not, Heaven knows, by arrogance or impertinence. I know no other way, at once so plain and so short, of delivering my thoughts on the specimen of your translation, which, on the whole, I admire exceedingly; thinking it breathes the spirit, and conveys the manner of the original; though having here neither Homer, nor Pope's Homer, I cannot speak precisely of particular lines or expressions, or compare your blank verse with his rhyme, except by declaring, that I think blank verse infinitely more congenial to the magnificent simplicity of Homer's hexameters, than the confined couplets, and the jingle of rhyme.”

His amendments are chiefly bestowed on the lines encumbered with elisions; and I will just take this opportunity to tell you, my dear, because I know you to be as much interested in what I write as myself, that some of the most offensive of these elisions were occasioned by mere criticism. I was fairly hunted into them by vexatious objections made without end by — and his friend, and altered, and altered, till at last I did not care how I altered. Many thanks for —'s

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, which deserve just the character you give
: they are neat and easy—but I would mumble
till if I could get at her, for allowing herself to
be for a moment that I praised the Chancellor
a view to emolument. I wrote those stanza
ely for my own amusement, and they slept in
k closet years after I composed them; not in the
it designed for publication. But when Johnson ha
nted off the longer pieces of which the first volume
ncipally consists, he wrote me word that he wanted
et two thousand lines to swell it to a proper size. On
hat occasion it was, that I collected every scrap c
verse that I could find, and that among the rest. Non
of the smaller poems had been introduced, or had bee
published at all with my name, but for this necessity.

Just as I wrote the last word, I was called down t
Dr. Kerr, who came to pay me a voluntary visit
Were I sick, his cheerful and friendly manner woul
almost restore me. Air and exercise are his theme
them he recommends as the best physic for me, and i
all weathers. Come, therefore, my dear, and take
little of this good physic with me, for you will find
beneficial as well as I; come and assist Mrs. Un
in the re-establishment of your cousin's health.
and exercise, and she and you together, will make
a perfect Samson. You will have a good house
your head, comfortable apartments, obliging r
bours, good roads, a pleasant country, and in u
constant companions, two who will love you, a
already love you dearly, and with all our heart
you are in any danger of trouble, it is from m
my fits of dejection seize me; and as often as
you will be grieved for me: but perhaps by yo
ance I shall be able to resist them better. If t
creature under Heaven, from whose co-operat

Mrs. Unwin I can reasonably expect such a blessing, that creature is yourself. I was not without such attacks when I lived in London, though at that time they were less oppressive; but in your company I was never unhappy a whole day in all my life.

Of how much importance is an author to himself! I return to that abominable specimen again, just to notice Maty's impatient censure of the repetition that you mention. I mean of the word *Hand*. In the original there is not a repetition of it. But to repeat a word in that manner, and on such an occasion, is by no means what he calls it, a *modern invention*. In Homer I could show him many such, and in Virgil they abound. Colman, who in his judgment of classical matters is inferior to none, says, "*I know not why Maty objects to this expression.*" I could easily change it, but the case standing thus, I know not whether my proud stomach will condescend so low. I rather feel myself disinclined to it.

One evening last week Mrs. Unwin and I took our walk to Weston, and as we were returning through the grove, opposite the house, the Throckmortons presented themselves at the door. They are owners of a house at Weston, at present empty. It is a very good one, infinitely superior to ours. When we drank chocolate with them, they both expressed their ardent desire that we would take it, wishing to have us for nearer neighbours. If you, my cousin, were not so well provided for as you are, and at our very elbow, I verily believe I should have mustered all my rhetoric to recommend it to you. You might have it for ever without danger of ejectment; whereas your possession of the vicarage depends on the life of the vicar, who is eighty-six. The environs are most beautiful, and the village itself one of the prettiest I ever saw. Add to this, you would

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mediately into Mr. Throckmorton's **pleas** where you would not soil your slipper ever.

A most unfortunate mistake was made by **nan's** bailiff in his absence. Just before he on last year, for the winter, he gave him or short the tops of the flowering shrubs, that pentine walk in a delightful grove, celebrat poetship in a little piece that you remembe ed the "Shrubbery." The dunce, misappr the order, cut down and faggotted up the ove, leaving neither tree, bush, nor twig;

it stumps about as high as my ankle. Mrs. **morton** told us that she never saw her husband n his life. I judge indeed by his physiognom has great sweetness in it, that he is very litt to that infernal passion; but had he cudgell for his cruel blunder, and the havoc mad quence of it, I could have excused him.

I felt myself really concerned for the Ch^{ar} ness, from what I learned of it, both from and from General Cowper, concluded the I am accordingly delighted in the same p the news of his recovery. May he live. still the support of government! If it s pleasure to render me personally any r I have no objection to it; but Heaven impossible for any living wight to be on that subject than myself.

May God be ever with you, my be

LETTER LIV.
To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, May 15, 1786.

From this very morning I begin to date the last month of our long separation, and confidently, and most comfortably hope, that before the 15th of June shall present itself, we shall have seen each other. Is it not so? And will it not be one of the most extraordinary æras of my extraordinary life? A year ago, we neither corresponded nor expected to meet in this world. But this world is a scene of marvellous events, many of them more marvellous than fiction itself would dare to hazard; and, blessed be God! they are not all of the distressing kind; now and then, in the course of an existence whose hue is for the most part sable, a day turns up that makes amends for many sighs, and many subjects of complaint. Such a day shall I account the day of your arrival at Olney.

Wherefore is it, canst thou tell me, that, together with all those delightful sensations to which the sight of a long absent friend gives birth, there is a mixture of something painful? Flutterings, and tumults, and I know not what accompaniments of our pleasure, that are, in fact, perfectly foreign from the occasion? Such I feel when I think of our meeting, and such, I suppose, feel you; and the nearer the crisis approaches the more I am sensible of them. I know, beforehand, that they will increase with every turn of the wheels that shall convey me to Newport, when I shall set out to meet you, and that when we actually meet, the pleasure, and this unaccountable pain together, will be as much as I shall be able to support. I am utterly at a

loss for the cause, and can only resolve it into that appointment, by which it has been fore-ordained that all human delights shall be qualified and mingled with their contraries. For there is nothing formidable in you, to me at least, there is nothing such. No, not even in your menaces, unless when you threaten me to write no more. Nay, I verily believe, did I not know you to be what you are, and had less affection for you than I have, I should have fewer of these emotions, of which I would have none if I could help it. But a fig for them all! Let us resolve to combat with, and to conquer them. They are dreams, they are illusions of the judgment: some enemy that hates the happiness of human kind, and is ever industrious to dash it, works them in us, and their being so perfectly unreasonable as they are is a proof of it. Nothing that *is* such can be the work of a good agent. This I know too by experience, that, like all other illusions, they exist only by force of imagination—are indebted for their prevalence to the absence of their object, and in a few moments after its appearance cease. So, then, this is a settled point, and the case stands thus: You will tremble as you draw near to Newport, and so shall I: but we will both recollect that there is no reason why we should, and this recollection will at least have some little effect in our favour. We will likewise both take the comfort of what we know to be true, that the tumult will soon cease, and the pleasure long survive the pain, even as long, I trust, as we ourselves shall survive it.

What you say of Maty gives me all the consolation that you intended. We both think it highly probable that you suggest the true cause of his displeasure, when you suppose him mortified at not having had a part of the translation laid before him, ere the specimen was published. The General was very much hurt, and

calls his censure harsh and unreasonable. He likewise sent me a consolatory letter on the occasion, in which he took the kindest pains to heal the wound that he supposed I might have suffered. I am not naturally insensible, and the sensibilities that I had by nature have been wonderfully enhanced by a long series of shocks, given to a frame of nerves that was never very athletic. I feel accordingly, whether painful or pleasant, in the extreme—am easily elevated, and easily cast down. The frown of a critic freezes my poetical powers, and discourages me to a degree that makes me ashamed of my own weakness. Yet I presently recover my confidence again. The half of what you so kindly say in your last, would at any time restore my spirits, and being said by you, is infallible. I am not ashamed to confess, that having commenced an Author, I am most abundantly desirous to succeed as such. *I have (what perhaps you little suspect me of) in my nature, an infinite share of ambition.* But with it, I have, at the same time, as you well know, an equal share of diffidence. To this combination of opposite qualities it has been owing, that till lately I stole through life without undertaking any thing, yet always wishing to distinguish myself. At last I ventured, ventured too in the only path that, at so late a period, was yet open to me, and am determined, if God have not determined otherwise, to work my way through the obscurity that has been so long my portion into notice. Every thing, therefore, that seems to threaten this my favourite purpose with disappointment, affects me nearly. I suppose that all ambitious minds are in the same predicament. He who seeks distinction must be sensible of disapprobation exactly in the same proportion as he desires applause. And now, my precious cousin, I have unfolded my heart to you in this particular with-

out a speck of dissimulation. Some people, and good people too, would blame me, but you will not, and they I think would blame without just cause. We certainly do not honour God when we bury, or when we neglect to improve as far as we may whatever talent he may have bestowed on us, whether it be little or much. In natural things, as well as in spiritual, it is a never-failing truth, that to him who *hath*, that is, to him who occupies what he hath diligently, and so as to increase it, more shall be given. Set me down, therefore, my dear, for an industrious rhymers, so long as I shall have the ability; for in this only way is it possible for me, so far as I can see, either to honour God, or to serve man, or even to serve myself.

I rejoice to hear that Mr. Throckmorton wishes to be on a more intimate footing. I am shy, and suspect that he is not very much otherwise; and the consequence has been, that we have mutually wished an acquaintance without being able to accomplish it. Blessings on you for the hint that you dropt on the subject of the house at Weston; for the burthen of my song is, since we have met once again, let us never be separated, as we have been, more.

W. C.

LETTER LV.
To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, May 15, 1786.

I have at length, my cousin, found my way into my summer abode. I believe that I described it to you some time since, and will therefore now leave it undescribed. I will only say that I am writing in a band-box, situated, at the least in my account, *delightfully*, because it has a window in one side

that opens into that orchard through which, as I am sitting here, I shall see you often pass, and which, therefore, I already prefer to all the orchards in the world. You do well to prepare me for all possible delays, because in this life all sorts of disappointments are possible, and I shall do well, if any such delay of your journey should happen, to practise that lesson of patience which you inculcate. But it is a lesson which even with you for my teacher, I shall be slow to learn. Being sure, however, that you will not procrastinate without cause, I will make myself as easy as I can about it, and hope the best. To convince you how much I am under discipline and good advice, I will lay aside a favourite measure, influenced in doing so by nothing but the good sense of your contrary opinion. I had set my heart on meeting you at Newport. In my haste to see you once again, I was willing to overlook many awkwardnesses I could not but foresee would attend it. I put them aside so long as I only foresaw them myself, but since I find that you foresee them too, I can no longer deal so slightly with them. It is therefore determined that we meet at Olney. Much I shall feel, but I will not die if I can help it, and I beg that you will take all possible care to outlive it likewise, for I know what it is to be balked in the moment of acquisition, and should be loth to know it again.

Last Monday, in the evening, we walked to Weston, according to our usual custom. It happened, owing to a mistake of time, that we set out half an hour sooner than usual. This mistake we discovered while we were in the wilderness; so, finding that we had time before us, as they say, Mrs. Unwin proposed that we should go into the village, and take a view of the house that I had just mentioned to you. We did so, and found it such a one as in most respects would suit you

well. But Moses Brown, our vicar, who, as I told you, is in his eighty-sixth year, is not bound to die for that reason. He said himself, when he was here last summer that he should live ten years longer, and for aught that appears, so he may. In which case, for the sake of its near neighbourhood to us, the vicarage has charms for me that no other place can rival. But this, and a thousand things more, shall be talked over when you come.

We have been industriously cultivating our acquaintance with our Weston neighbours since I wrote last, and they, on their part, have been equally diligent in the same cause. I have a notion that we shall all suit well. I see much in them both that I admire. You know, perhaps, that they are Catholics.

It is a delightful bundle of praise, my cousin, that you sent me : all jasmine and lavender. Whoever the lady is, she has an admirable pen, and a cultivated mind. If a person reads, it is no matter in what language ; and if the mind be informed, it is no matter whether that mind belongs to a man or a woman. The taste and the judgment will receive the benefit alike in both.—Long before the *Task* was published, I made an experiment one day, being in a frolicksome mood, upon my friend : We were walking in the garden, and conversing on a subject similar to these lines :—

The few that pray at all, pray oft amiss,
And seeking grace t'improve the present good,
Would urge a wiser suit than asking more.

I repeated them, and said to him with an air of non-chalance, " Do you recollect those lines ? I have seen them somewhere ; where are they ? " He put on a considering face, and after some deliberation replied—
" *Oh, I will tell you where they must be—in the Night*

Thoughts." I was glad my trial turned out so well, and did not undeceive him. I mention this occurrence only in confirmation of the letter-writer's opinion ; but, at the same time, I do assure you, on the faith of an honest man, that I never in my life designed an imitation of Young, or of any other writer ; for mimicry is my abhorrence, at least in poetry.

Assure yourself, my dearest cousin, that both for your sake, since you make a point of it, and for my own, I will be as philosophically careful as possible that these fine nerves of mine shall not be beyond measure agitated when you arrive. In truth, there is much greater probability that they will be benefited, and greatly too. Joy of heart, from whatever occasion it may arise, is the best of all nervous medicines, and I should not wonder if such a turn given to my spirits, should have even a lasting effect, of the most advantageous kind, upon them. You must not imagine, neither, that I am, on the whole, in any great degree, subject to nervous affections ; occasionally I am, and have been these many years much liable to dejection. But at intervals, and sometimes for an interval of weeks, no creature would suspect it. For I have not that which commonly is a symptom of such a case belonging to me : I mean extraordinary elevation in the absence of Mr. Blue-Devil. When I am in my best health, my tide of animal sprightliness flows with great equality, so that I am never, at any time, exalted in proportion as I am sometimes depressed. My depression has a cause, and if that cause were to cease, I should be as cheerful thenceforth, and perhaps for ever, as any man need be. But as I have often said, Mrs. Unwin shall be my expositor.

Adieu, my beloved cousin. God grant that our friendship, which, while we could see each other, ne-

ver suffered a moment's interruption, and which so long a separation has not in the least abated, may glow in us to our last hour, and be renewed in a better world, there to be perpetuated for ever. For you must know that I should not love you half so well, if I did not believe you would be my friend to eternity. There is not room enough for friendship to unfold itself in full bloom, in such a nook of life as this. Therefore I am, and must, and will be, yours for ever.

W. C.

LETTER LVI.
To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, May 29, 1786.

Thou dear, comfortable cousin, whose letters, among all that I receive, have this property peculiarly their own, that I expect them without trembling, and never find any thing in them that does not give me pleasure! for which, therefore, I would take nothing in exchange that the world can give me, save and except that for which I must exchange them soon, (and happy shall I be to do so) your own company. That, indeed, is delayed a little too long, to my impatience, at least, it seems so, who find the spring, backward as it is, too forward, because many of its beauties will have faded before you will have an opportunity to see them. We took our customary walk yesterday in the wilderness at Weston, and saw, with regret, the laburnums, syringas, and guelder-roses, some of them blown, and others just upon the point of blowing, and could not help observing—all these will be gone before Lady Hesketh comes. Still, however, *there* will be roses, and jessamine, and honey-suckle,

and shady walks, and you will partake them with us. But I want you to have a share of every thing that is delightful here, and cannot bear that the advance of the season should steal away a single pleasure before you can come to enjoy it.

Every day I think of you, and almost all the day long; I will venture to say that even *you* were never so expected in your life. I called last week at the Quaker's to see the furniture of your bed, the fame of which had reached me. It is, I assure you, superb, of printed cotton, and the subject classical. Every morning you will open your eyes on Phæton kneeling to Apollo, and imploring his father to grant him the conduct of his chariot for a day. May your sleep be as sound as your bed will be sumptuous, and your nights, at least, will be provided well for.

I shall send up the sixth and seventh books of the Iliad shortly, and shall address them to you. You will forward them to the General. I long to show you my workshop, and to see you sitting on the opposite side of my table. We shall be as close packed as two wax figures in an old-fashioned picture-frame. I am writing in it now. It is the place in which I fabricate all my verse in summer time. I rose an hour sooner than usual this morning, that I might finish my sheet before breakfast, for I must write this day to the General.

The grass under my windows is all bespangled with dew-drops, and the birds are singing in the apple-trees among the blossoms. Never poet had a more commodious oratory in which to invoke his muse.

I have made your heart ache too often, my poor dear cousin, with talking about my fits of dejection. Something has happened that has led me to the subject, or I would have mentioned them more sparingly. Do not suppose or suspect that I treat you with reserve; there

is nothing in which I am concerned that you shall not be made acquainted with. But the tale is too long for a letter. I will only add for your present satisfaction, that the cause is not exterior, that it is not within the reach of human aid, and that yet I have a hope myself, and Mrs. Unwin a strong persuasion, of its removal. I am indeed even now, and have been for a considerable time, sensible of a change for the better, and expect, with good reason, a comfortable lift from you. Guess, then, my beloved cousin, with what wishes I look forward to the time of your arrival, from whose coming I promise myself not only pleasure, but peace of mind, at least an additional share of it. At present it is an uncertain and transient guest with me, but the joy with which I shall see and converse with you at Olney may, perhaps, make it an abiding one.

W. C.

LETTER LVII.
To Lady HESKETH.

Olney, June 4 & 5, 1786.

Ah! my cousin, you begin already to fear and quake. What a hero am I, compared with you! I have no fears of *you*: on the contrary, am as bold as a lion. I wish that your carriage were even now at the door: you should soon see with how much courage I would face you. But what cause have you for fear? Am I not your cousin, with whom you have wandered in the fields of Freemantle, and at Bevis's Mount? Who used to read to you, to laugh with you, till our sides have ached, at any thing, or nothing? And am I, in these respects, at all altered? *You will not find me so, but just as ready to laugh and to*

wander as you ever knew me. A cloud, perhaps, may come over me now and then for a few hours, but from clouds I was never exempted. And are not you the identical cousin with whom I have performed all these feats? The very Harriet whom I saw, for the first time, at De Grey's, in Norfolk-street? (It was on a Sunday, when you came with my uncle and aunt to drink tea there, and I had dined there, and was just going back to Westminster.) If these things are so, and I am sure that you cannot gainsay a syllable of them all, then this consequence follows; that I do not promise myself more pleasure from your company than I shall be sure to find. Then you are my cousin, in whom I always delighted, and in whom I doubt not that I shall delight, even to my latest hour. But this wicked coach-maker has sunk my spirits. What a miserable thing it is to depend, in any degree, for the accomplishment of a wish, and that wish so fervent, on the punctuality of a creature who, I suppose, was never punctual in his life! Do tell him, my dear, in order to quicken him, that if he performs his promise he shall make my coach when I want one, and that if he performs it not, I will most assuredly employ some other man.

The Throckmortons sent a note to invite us to dinner—we went, and a very agreeable day we had. They made no fuss with us, which I was heartily glad to see, for where I give trouble I am sure that I cannot be welcome. Themselves, and their chaplain, and we, were all the party. After dinner we had much cheerful and pleasant talk, the particulars of which might not, perhaps, be so entertaining upon paper; therefore, all but one I will omit, and that I will mention only because it will of itself be sufficient to give you an insight into their opinion on a very important subject—their own religion. I happened to say, that in all professions and trades mankind affected an air of mystery.

Physicians, I observed, in particular, were objects of that remark, who persist in prescribing in Latin, many times, no doubt, to the hazard of a patient's life, through the ignorance of an apothecary. Mr. Throckmorton assented to what I said, and turning to his chaplain, to my infinite surprize, observed to him, "*That is just as absurd as our praying in Latin.*" I could have hugged him for his liberality and freedom from bigotry, but thought it rather more decent to let the matter pass without any visible notice. I therefore heard it with pleasure, and kept my pleasure to myself. The two ladies, in the mean time, were tete-a-tete in the drawing-room. Their conversation turned principally (as I afterwards learned of Mrs. Unwin) on a most delightful topic, viz. myself. In the first place, Mrs. Throckmorton admired my book, from which she quoted by heart more than I could repeat, though I so lately wrote it. In short, my dear, I cannot proceed to relate what she said of the book, and the book's author, for that abominable modesty that I cannot even yet get rid of. Let it suffice to say, that you, who are disposed to love every body who speaks kindly of your cousin, will certainly love Mrs. Throckmorton, when you shall be told what she said of him, and that you *will* be told is equally certain, because it depends on Mrs. Unwin. It is a very convenient thing to have a Mrs. Unwin, who will tell you many a good and long story for me, that I am not able to tell for myself. I am, however, not at all in arrears to my neighbours in the matter of admiration and esteem, but the more I know, the more I like them, and have nearly an affection for them both. I am delighted that the Task has so large a share of the approbation of your sensible Suffolk friend.

I received yesterday, from the General, another letter of T. S. an unknown auxiliary having started up in my behalf. I believe I shall leave the business of an-

swering to him, having no leisure myself for controversy. He lies very open to a very effectual reply.

My dearest cousin, adieu ! I hope to write to you but once more before we meet. But Oh ! this coach-maker, and Oh ! this holiday week !

Yours, with impatient desire to see you,
W. C.

LETTER LVIII.
To JOSEPH HILL, Esq.

Olney, June 9, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The little time that I can devote to any other purpose than that of poetry is, as you may suppose, stolep. Homer is urgent. Much is done, but much remains undone, and no school-boy is more attentive to the performance of his daily task than I am. You will therefore excuse me, if at present I am unfrequent and short.

The paper tells me that the Chancellor has relapsed, and I am truly sorry to hear it. The first attack was dangerous, but a second must be more formidable still. It is not probable that I should ever hear from him again, if he survive ; yet, of the much that I should have felt for him, had our connection never been interrupted, I still feel much. Every body will feel the loss of a man whose abilities have made him of such general importance.

I correspond again with Colman, and upon the most friendly footing, and find in his instance, and in some others, that an intimate intercourse which has been only casually suspended, not forfeited on either side by

outrage, is capable not only of revival, but improvement.

I had a letter some time since that gave me great pleasure, from your sister Fanny. Such notices from old friends are always pleasant, and of such pleasures I have received many lately. They refresh the remembrance of early days, and make me young again. The noble institution of the Nonsense Club will be forgotten when we are gone, who composed it; but I often think of your most heroic line, written at one of our meetings, and especially think of it when I am translating Homer—

“To whom replied the Devil yard-long-tail’d.”

There never was any thing more truly Grecian than that triple epithet, and were it possible to introduce it into either Iliad or Odyssey, I should certainly steal it.

I am now flushed with expectation of Lady Hesketh, who spends the summer with us. We hope to see her next week. We have found admirable lodgings both for her and her suite, and a Quaker in this town, still more admirable than they, who, as if he loved her as much I do, furnishes them for her with real elegance,

W. C.

LETTER LIX.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

Olney, June 9, 1786.

My dear cousin's arrival has, as it could not fail to do, made us happier than we ever were at Olney. Her great kindness in giving us her company is a cordial that I shall feel the effect of, not only while she is here, but while I live.

Olney will not be much longer the place of our habitation. At a village, two miles distant, we have hired a house of Mr. Throckmorton, a much better than we occupy at present, and yet not more expensive. It is situated very near to our most agreeable landlord, and his agreeable pleasure grounds. In him, and in his wife, we shall find such companions as will always make the time pass pleasantly while they are in the country, and his grounds will afford us good air, and good walking room in the winter; two advantages which we have not enjoyed at Olney, where I have no neighbour with whom I can converse, and where, seven months in the year, I have been imprisoned by dirty and impassable ways, till both my health and Mrs. Unwin's have suffered materially.

Homer is ever importunate, and will not suffer me to spend half the time with my distant friends that I would gladly give them.

W. C.

LETTER LX.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

Olney, Oct. 6, 1786.

You have not heard, I suppose, that the ninth book of my translation is at the bottom of the Thames. But it is even so. A storm overtook it in its way to Kingston, and it sunk, together with the whole cargo of the boat in which it was a passenger. Not figuratively foreshowing, I hope, by its submersion, the fate of all the rest. My kind and generous cousin, who leaves nothing undone that she thinks can conduce to my comfort, encouragement, or convenience, is my transcriber also. *She* wrote the copy,

and *she* will have to write it again—*Hers*, therefore, is the damage. I have a thousand reasons to lament that the time approaches when we must lose her. She has made a winterly summer a most delightful one, but the winter itself we must spend without her.

W. C.

The letters which I have just imparted to my reader exhibit a picture so minute and so admirable, of the life, the studies, and the affections of Cowper, during the period to which they relate, that they require no comment from his biographer. They must render all who read them intimately acquainted with the writer, and the result of such intimacy must be, what it is at once my duty and my delight to promote, an increase of public affection for his enchanting character, an effect which all his posthumous compositions are excellently suited to extend and confirm.

It is now incumbent on me to relate the consequences of a visit, so fondly expected by the poet, and happily productive of a change in his local situation.

It does not always happen, when the heart and fancy have indulged themselves with such fervency in a prospect of delight, from the renewed society of a long absent friend, it does not always happen, that the pleasure, on its arrival, proves exactly what it promised to be on its approach. But in the present case, to the honour of the two friends concerned, the delightful vision was followed by a reality of delight. Cowper was truly happy in receiving and settling his beloved, though long unseen relation, as his neighbour: she was comfortably lodged in the vicarage of Olney, a mansion so near to his residence, and so commodious from the private communication between their two houses, that

the long separated and most seasonably re-united friends here enjoyed all the easy intercourse of a domestic union.

Cowper derived from this fortunate event not only the advantage of daily conversation with another cultivated mind, in affectionate unison with his own, but, as his new neighbour had brought her carriage and horses to Olney, he was gradually tempted to survey, in a wider range, the face of a country that he loved, and to mix a little more with its most worthy inhabitants. His life had been so retired at Olney that he had not even extended his excursions to the neighbouring town of Newport-Pagnell, in the course of many years; but the convenience of a carriage induced him, in August, to visit Mr. Bull, who resided there; the friend to whose assiduous attention he had felt himself much obliged in a season of mental depression. A few letters of Cowper to this gentleman are so expressive of cordial esteem, and so agreeably illustrate the character of each, that I shall take this opportunity of making a short selection from the private papers, of which the kindness of the person to whom they are addressed has enabled me to avail myself. When Cowper published the first volume of his poems, Mr. Bull wrote to him on the occasion. The answer of the poet, March 24, 1782, I reserve for a future part of my work. A subsequent letter, dated October 27th, in the same year, opens with this lively paragraph:—

“ Mon amiable and très cher Ami,

“ It is not in the power of chaises, or chariots, to carry you where my affections will not follow you: if I heard that you were gone to finish your days in the moon, I should not love you the

ON FRIENDSHIP.

Amicitia nisi inter bonos esse non potest. CICERO.

1.

What virtue can we name, or grace,
But men unqualified and base
Will boast it their possession?
Profusion apes the noble part
Of liberality of heart,
And dulness of discretion.

2.

But as the gem of richest cost
Is ever counterfeited most ;
So always imitation
Employs the utmost skill she can
To counterfeit the faithful man,
The friend of long duration.

VARIATIONS.

I.—1. What virtue or what mental grace,

II.— If ev'ry polish'd gem we find,
Illuminating heart or mind,
Provoke to imitation,
No wonder friendship does the same,
That jewel of the purest flame,
Or rather constellation.

3.

Some will pronounce me too severe,
But long experience speaks me clear,
Therefore, that censure scorning,
I will proceed to mark the shelves
On which so many dash themselves,
And give the simple warning.

4.

Youth, unadmonish'd by a guide,
Will trust to any fair outside—
An error soon corrected!
For who but learns, with riper years,
That man, when smoothest he appears,
Is most to be suspected?

5.

But here again a danger lies ;
Lest, thus deluded by our eyes,
And taking trash for treasure,

VARIATIONS.

- II.—No knave, but boldly will pretend
The requisites that form a friend,
A real and a sound one ;
Nor any fool he would deceive,
But prove as ready to believe,
And dream that he has found one.
- V.—1. Candid, and generous, and just,
2. Boys care but little whom they trust.
- V.—2. Lest, having misemploy'd our eyes,

We should, when undeceiv'd, conclude
 Friendship imaginary good,
 A mere Utopian pleasure.

6.

An acquisition rather rare
 Is yet no subject of despair :
 Nor should it seem distressful,
 If either on forbidden ground,
 Or where it was not to be found,
 We sought it unsuccessful.

7.

No friendship will abide the test
 That stands on sordid interest
 And mean self-love erected ;
 Nor such, as may awhile subsist,
 'Twixt sensualist and sensualist,
 For vicious ends connected.

8.

Who hopes a friend, should have a heart
 Himself, well furnish'd for the part,
 And ready, on occasion,

VARIATIONS.

V.—4. We should unwarily conclude
 5. Friendship a false ideal good.

VI.—3. Nor is it wise complaining,
 6. We sought without attaining.

VII.—5. Between the sot and sensualist.

VIII.—Who seeks a friend, should come dispos'd
 T' exhibit, in full bloom disclos'd,
 The graces and the beauties

To show the virtue that he seeks ;
For 'tis an union that bespeaks
A just reciprocation.

9.

A fretful temper will divide
The closest knot that may be tied,
By ceaseless sharp corrosion :
A temper passionate and fierce
May suddenly your joys disperse
At one immense explosion.

10.

In vain the talkative unite
With hope of permanent delight :
The secret just committed

VARIATIONS.

That form the character he seeks,
For 'tis an union that bespeaks
Reciprocated duties.

Mutual attention is implied,
And equal truth on either side,
And constantly supported :
'Tis senseless arrogance t' accuse
Another of sinister views,
Our own as much distorted.

But will sincerity suffice ?
It is, indeed, above all price,
And must be made the basis ;
But ev'ry virtue of the soul
Must constitute the charming whole,
All shining in their places.

They drop, through mere desire to prate,
Forgetting its important weight,
And by themselves outwitted.

11.

How bright soe'er the prospect seems,
All thoughts of friendship are but dreams,
If envy chance to creep in.
An envious man, if you succeed,
May prove a dang'rous foe indeed,
But not a friend worth keeping.

12.

As envy pines at good possess'd,
So jealousy looks forth distress'd,
On good that seems approaching;
And, if success his steps attend,
Discerns a rival in a friend,
And hates him for encroaching.

13.

Hence authors of illustrious name,
Unless belied by common fame,
Are sadly prone to quarrel !
To deem the wit a friend displays
So much of loss to their own praise,
And pluck each other's laurel.

14.

A man, renown'd for repartee,
Will seldom scruple to make free
With friendship's finest feeling ;
Will thrust a dagger at your breast,
And tell you, 'twas a special jest,
By way of balm for healing.

VARIATIONS.

XIV.—5. And say he wounded you in jest.

15.

Beware of tattlers ! keep your ear
 Close stopt against the tales they bear,
 Fruits of their own invention !
 The separation of chief friends
 Is what their kindness most intends ;
 Their sport is your dissension.

16.

Friendship, that wantonly admits
 A joco-serious play of wits
 In brilliant altercation,
 Is union such as indicates,
 Like hand-in-hand insurance plates,
 Danger of conflagration.

17.

Some fickle creatures boast a soul
 True as the needle to the pole ;
 Yet shifting like the weather,

VARIATIONS.

XV.—Who keeps an open ear
 For tattlers, will be sure to hear
 The trumpet of invention.
 Aspersion is the babbler's trade,
 To listen is to lend him aid,
 And rush into contention.

XVI.—1. A friendship, that in frequent fits
 Of controversial rage emits
 The sparks of disputation.

XVII—3. Their humour yet so various ,

The needle's constancy forego
For any novelty, and show
Its variations rather.

18.

Insensibility makes some
Unseasonably deaf and dumb,
When most you need their pity.
'Tis waiting till the tears shall fall
From Gog and Magog in Guildhall,
Those playthings of the city.*

19.

The great and small but rarely meet
On terms of amity complete.
'Th' attempt would scarce be madder,
Should any, from the bottom, hope
At one huge stride to reach the top
Of an erected ladder.

VARIATIONS.

They manifest their whole life through
The needle's deviation too ;
Their love is so precarious.

XIX.—3.

Plebeians must surrender,
And yield so much to noble folk,
It is combining fire with smoke,
Obscurity with splendour.

Some are so placid and serene
(As Irish bogs are always green),
They sleep secure from waking,

* This was written before the removal of them.

20.

Courtier and patriot cannot mix
 Their het'rogeneous politics
 Without an effervescence,
 Such as of salts with lemon-juice,
 But which is rarely known t' induce,
 Like that, a coalescence.

21.

Religion should extinguish strife,
 And make a calm of human life.
 But even those who differ
 Only on topics left at large,
 How fiercely will they meet and charge!
 No combatants are stiffer.

22.

To prove, alas! my main intent,
 Needs no great cost of argument,
 No cutting and contriving.

VARIATIONS.

And are, indeed, a bog that bears
 Your unparticipated cares
 Unmov'd, and without quaking.

XX.—4. Like that of salts with lemon-juice,
 Which does not yet like that produce
 A friendly coalescence.

XXI.—4. On points which God has left at large.

XXII.—1. To prove at last my main intent
 Needs no expense of argument.

Seeking a real friend, we seem
 T' adopt the chemist's golden dream,
 With still less hope of thriving.

23.

Then judge, before you choose your man,
 As circumspectly as you can ;
 And, having made election,
 See that no disrespect of yours,
 Such as a friend but ill endures,
 Enfeeble his affection.

VARIATIONS.

Sometimes the fault is all your own,
 Some blemish in due time made known
 By trespass or omission :
 Sometimes occasion brings to light
 Our friend's defect, long hid from sight,
 And even from suspicion.

- XXIII.—1. Then judge yourself, and prove your man.
 4. Beware no negligence of yours.

That secrets are a sacred trust,
 That friends should be sincere and just,
 That constancy befits them,
 Are observations on the case,
 That savour much of common-place,
 And all the world admits them.

24.

It is not timber, lead and stone,
An architect requires alone
To finish a great building ;
The palace were but half complete
Could he by any chance forget
The carving and the gilding.

25.

As similarity of mind,
Or something not to be defin'd,
First rivets our attention ;
So manners decent and polite,
The same we practis'd at first sight,
Must save it from declension.

26.

The man who hails you Tom or Jack,
And proves, by thumping on your back,
His sense of your great merit,
Is such a friend that one had need
Be very much his friend indeed,
To pardon or to bear it.

VARIATIONS.

XXIV.—1. But 'tis not timber, lead and stone.

3. To finish a fine building.

5. If he could possibly forget.

XXV.—3. First fixes our attention.

XXVI.—1. The man that hails you Tom or Jack,
And proves, by thumps upon your back,
How he esteems your merit.

27.

Some friends make this their prudent plan—
 Say little, and hear all you can—
 Safe policy but hateful!
 So barren sands imbibe the show'r,
 But render neither fruit nor flow'r—
 Unpleasant and ungrateful.

28.

They whisper trivial things, and small;
 But to communicate at all
 Things serious, deem improper.
 Their feculence and froth they show,
 But keep their best contents below,
 Just like a simm'ring copper.

29.

These samples (for, alas! at last
 These are but samples, and a taste
 Of evils yet unmention'd)
 May prove the task a task indeed,
 In which 'tis much if we succeed,
 However well intention'd.

VARIATIONS.

XXVII.—1. Some act upon this prudent plan."

XXVIII.—The man I trust, if shy to me,
 Shall find me as reserv'd as he:
 No subterfuge or pleading
 Shall win my confidence again;
 I will by no means entertain
 A spy on my preceeding.

XXIX.—Pursue the search and you will find
 Good sense and knowledge of mankind.

30.

Pursue the theme and you shall find
A disciplin'd and furnish'd mind
 To be at least expedient ;
And, after summing all the rest,
Religion ruling in the breast
 A principal ingredient.

31.

True friendship has, in short, a grace
More than terrestrial in its face,
 That proves it Heaven-descended.,
Man's love of woman not so pure,
Nor when sincerest, so secure,
 To last till life is ended.

VARIATIONS.

The noblest friendship ever shown
The Saviour's history makes known,
 Though some have turn'd and turn'd it,
And, whether being craz'd or blind,
Or seeking with a bias'd mind,
 Have not, it seems, discern'd it.

O friendship, if my soul forego
Thy dear delights while here below,
 To mortify and grieve me,
May I myself at last appear
Unworthy, base, and insincere,
 Or may my friend deceive me !

This sprightly little poem contains the essence of all that has been said on this interesting subject, by the best writers of different countries. It is pleasing to reflect, that a man who entertained such refined ideas of friendship, and expressed them so happily, was singularly fortunate in this very important article of human life. Indeed, he was fortunate in this respect to such a degree, that Providence seems to have supplied him most unexpectedly, at different periods of his troubled existence, with exactly such friends as the peculiar exigences of his situation required. The truth of this remark is exemplified in the seasonable assistance that his tender spirits derived from the kindness of Mrs. Unwin at Huntingdon; of Lady Austen, and Lady Hesketh, at Olney, and of his young kinsman in Norfolk, who will soon attract the notice and obtain the esteem of my reader, as the affectionate superintendent of Cowper's declining days. To the honour of human nature, and of the present times, it will appear, that a sequestered poet, pre-eminent in genius and calamity, was beloved and assisted by his friends of both sexes, with a purity of zeal, and an inexhaustible ardour of affection, more resembling the friendship of the heroic ages, than the precarious attachments of the modern world.

The visit of Lady Hesketh, to Olney, led to a very favourable change in the residence of Cowper. He had now passed nineteen years in a scene that was far from suiting him. The house he inhabited looked on a market-place, and once, in a season of illness, he was so apprehensive of being incommoded by the bustle of a fair, that he requested to lodge, for a single night, under the roof of his friend, Mr. Newton; and he was tempted, by the more comfortable situation of the vicarage, to remain fourteen months in the house of his be-

nevolent neighbour. His intimacy with this venerable Divine was so great, that Mr. Newton has described it in the following remarkable terms, in *Memoirs of the Poet*, which affection induced him to begin, but which the troubles and infirmities of very advanced life have obliged him to relinquish.

“For nearly twelve years we were seldom separated for seven hours at a time, when we were awake, and at home:—The first six I passed in daily admiring, and aiming to imitate him: during the second six, I walked pensively with him in the valley of the shadow of death.”

Mr. Newton records, with a becoming satisfaction, the evangelical charity of his friend: “He loved the poor,” says his devout memorialist: “He often visited them in their cottages, conversed with them in the most condescending manner, sympathized with them, counselled and comforted them in their distresses; and those who were seriously disposed were often cheered and animated by his prayers!”—After the removal of Mr. Newton to London, and the departure of Lady Austen, Olney had no particular attractions for Cowper; and Lady Hesketh was happy in promoting the project, which had occurred to him, of removing with Mrs. Unwin, to the near and pleasant village of Weston. A scene highly favourable to his health and amusement! For, with a very comfortable mansion, it afforded him a garden, and a field of considerable extent, which he delighted to cultivate and embellish. With these he had advantages still more desirable—easy, perpetual access to the spacious and tranquil pleasure grounds of his accomplished and benevolent landlord, Mr. Throckmorton, whose neighbouring house supplied him with society peculiarly suited to his gentle and delicate spirit.

He removed from Olney to Weston in November, 1786. The course of his life in his new situation (the spot most pleasing to his fancy) will be best described by the subsequent series of his letters to that amiable relation to whom he considered himself as particularly indebted for this improvement in his domestic scenery. With these I shall occasionally connect a selection of his letters to particular friends, and particularly the letters addressed to one of his most intimate correspondents, who happily commenced an acquaintance with the poet in the beginning of the year 1787. I add with pleasure the name of Mr. Rose, the Barrister, whose friendship I was so fortunate as to share, by meeting him at Weston in a subsequent period, and whom I instantly learnt to regard by finding that he held a very justly a place of the most desirable distinction in the heart of Cowper.

LETTER LXI.
To Lady HESKETH.

Weston Lodge, Nov. 26, 1786.

It is my birth-day, my beloved cousin, and I determine to employ a part of it, that it may not be destitute of festivity, in writing to you. The dark thick fog that has obscured it would have been a burthen to me at Olney, but here I have hardly attended to it. The neatness and snugness of our abode compensates all the dreariness of the season, and whether the ways are wet or dry, our house at least is always warm and commodious. Oh! for you, my cousin, to partake these comforts with us! I will not begin already to tease you upon that subject, but Mrs. Unwin remembers to have heard from your own lips, that

you hate London in the spring. Perhaps, therefore, by that time, you may be glad to escape from a scene, which will be every day growing more disagreeable, that you may enjoy the comforts of the Lodge. You well know, that the best house has a desolate appearance unfurnished. This house, accordingly, since it has been occupied by us, and our *Meubles*, is as much superior to what it was when you saw it, as you can imagine. The parlour is even elegant. When I say that the parlour is elegant, I do not mean to insinuate that the study is not so. It is neat, warm, and silent, and a much better study than I deserve, if I do not produce in it an incomparable translation of Homer. I think every day of those lines of Milton, and congratulate myself on having obtained, before I am quite superannuated, what he seems not to have hoped for sooner.

“ And may at length my weary age
“ Find out the peaceful hermitage!”

For if it is not a hermitage, at least it is a much better thing; and you must always understand, my dear, that when poets talk of cottages, hermitages, and such like things, they mean a house with six sashes in front, two comfortable parlours, a smart stair-case, and three bed-chambers of convenient dimensions; in short, exactly such a house as this.

The Throckmortons continue the most obliging neighbours in the world. One morning last week they both went with me to the Cliffs—a scene, my dear, in which you would delight beyond measure, but which you cannot visit except in the spring or autumn. The heat of summer, and the clinging dirt of winter, would destroy you. What is called the Cliff, is no cliff, nor at all like one, but a beautiful terrace, sloping gently

down to the Ouse, and from the brow of which, though not lofty, you have a view of such a valley as makes that which you see from the hills near Olney, and I have had the honour to celebrate, an affair of no consideration.

Wintry as the weather is, do not suspect that it confines me. I ramble daily, and every day change my ramble. Wherever I go, I find short grass under my feet, and when I have travelled, perhaps, five miles, come home with shoes not at all too dirty for a drawing-room. I was pacing yesterday under the elms that surround the field in which stands the great alcove, when, lifting my eyes, I saw two black genteel figures bolt through a hedge into the path where I was walking. You guess already who they were, and that they could be nobody but our neighbours. They had seen me from a hill at a distance, and had traversed a great turnip-field to get at me. You see, therefore, my dear, that I am in some request. Alas! in too much request with some people. The verses of Cadwallader have found me at last.

I am charmed with your account of our little cousin* at Kensington. If the world does not spoil him hereafter, he will be a valuable man.

Good night, and may God bless thee. W. C.

LETTER LXII.
To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, Dec. 4, 1786.

I send you, my dear, a melancholy letter, and I do not know that I shall now send you one very unlike it. Not that any thing occurs, it consequence of our late loss, more afflictive than wa

* Lord Cowper.

to be expected, but the mind does not perfectly recover its tone after a shock like that which has been felt so lately. This I observe, that though my experience has long since taught me that this world is a world of shadows, and that it is the more prudent, as well as the more Christian course, to possess the comforts that we find in it as if we possessed them not, it is no easy matter to reduce this doctrine into practice. We forget that that God who gave it may, when he pleases, take it away; and that, perhaps, it may please him to take it at a time when we least expect it, or are least disposed to part from it. Thus it has happened in the present case. There never was a moment in Unwin's life when there seemed to be more urgent want of him than the moment in which he died. He had attained to an age when, if they are at any time useful, men become more useful to their families, their friends, and the world. His parish began to feel, and to be sensible of the advantages of his ministry. The clergy around him were many of them awed by his example. His children were thriving under his own tuition and management, and his eldest boy is likely to feel his loss severely, being, by his years, in some respect qualified to understand the value of such a parent, by his literary proficiency—too clever for a school-boy, and too young, at the same time, for the university. The removal of a man in the prime of life, of such a character, and with such connections, seems to make a void in society that never can be filled. God seemed to have made him just what he was, that he might be a blessing to others, and when the influence of his character and abilities began to be felt, removed him. These are mysteries, my dear, that we cannot contemplate without astonishment, but which will, nevertheless, be ex-

plained hereafter, and must, in the mean time, be revered in silence. It is well for his mother that she has spent her life in the practice of an habitual acquiescence in the dispensations of Providence, else I know that this stroke would have been heavier, after all that she has suffered upon another account, than she could have borne. She derives, as she well may, great consolation from the thought that he lived the life and died the death of a Christian. The consequence is, if possible, more unavoidable than the most mathematical conclusion, that therefore he is happy. So farewell, my friend Unwin! the first man for whom I conceived a friendship after my removal from St. Alban's, and for whom I cannot but still continue to feel a friendship, though I shall see thee with these eyes no more.

W. C.

LETTER LXIII.
To Lady HESKETH.

Weston, Dec. 9, 1786.

I am perfectly sure that you are mistaken, though I do not wonder at it, considering the singular nature of the event, in the judgment that you form of poor Unwin's death, as it affects the interests of his intended pupil. When a tutor was wanted for him, you sought out the wisest and best man for the office within the circle of your connections. It pleased God to take him home to himself. Men eminently wise and good are very apt to die, because they are fit to do so. You found in Unwin a man worthy to succeed him, and He, in whose hands are the issues of life and death, seeing, no doubt, that Unwin was ripe for a removal into a better state, removed him also. The matter,

viewed in this light, seems not so wonderful as to refuse all explanation, except such as, in a melancholy moment, you have given to it. And I am so convinced that the little boy's destiny had no influence at all in hastening the death of his tutors elect, that where it not impossible, on more accounts than one, that I should be able to serve him in that capacity, I would, without the least fear of dying a moment the sooner, offer myself to that office; I would even do it, were I conscious of the same fitness for another and better state that I believe them to have been both endowed with. In that case, I, perhaps, might die too, but if I should, it would not be on account of that connection. Neither, my dear, had your interference in the business any thing to do with the catastrophe. Your whole conduct in it must have been acceptable in the sight of God, as it was directed by principles of the purest benevolence.

I have not touched Homer to-day. Yesterday was one of my terrible seasons, and when I arose this morning I found that I had not sufficiently recovered myself to engage in such an occupation. Having letters to write, I the more willingly gave myself a dispensation. Good night.

W. C.

LETTER LXIV.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

Weston, Dec. 9, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

We had just begun to enjoy the pleasantness of our new situation, to find, at least, as much comfort in it as the season of the year would permit, when affliction found us out in our retreat, and the

news reached us of the death of Mr. Unwin. He had taken a western tour with Mr. Henry Thornton, and in his return, at Winchester, was seized with a putrid fever, which sent him to his grave. He is gone to it, however, though young, as fit for it as age itself could have made him. Regretted, indeed, and always to be regretted by those who knew him, for he had every thing that makes a man valuable both in his principles and in his manners, but leaving still this consolation to his surviving friends, that he was desirable in this world chiefly because he was so well prepared for a better.

I find myself here situated exactly to my mind. Weston is one of the prettiest villages in England, and the walks about it at all seasons of the year delightful. I know that you will rejoice with me in the change that we have made, and for which I am altogether indebted to Lady Hesketh. It is a change as great as, to compare metropolitan things with rural, from St. Giles to Grosvenor-Square. Our house is in all respects commodious, and in some degree elegant; and I cannot give you a better idea of that which we have left, than by telling you the present candidates for it are a publican and a shoemaker.

W. C.

LETTER LXV.

To Lady HESKETH.

Weston, Dec. 21, 1786.

Your welcome letter, my beloved cousin, which ought by the date to have arrived on Sunday, being by some untoward accident delayed, came not till yesterday. It came, however, and has re-

lieved me from a thousand distressing apprehensions on your account.

The dew of your intelligence has refreshed my poetical laurels. A little praise now and then is very good for your hard-working poet, who is apt to grow languid, and perhaps careless, without it. Praise, I find, affects us as money does. The more a man gets of it, with the more vigilance he watches over and preserves it. Such, at least, is its effect on me, and you may assure yourself that I will never lose a mite of it for want of care.

I have already invited the good Padre in general terms, and he shall positively dine here next week, whether he will or not. I do not at all suspect that his kindness to Protestants has any thing insidious in it, any more than I suspect that he transcribes Homer for me with a view for my conversion. He would find that a tough piece of business, I can tell him; for when I had no religion at all, I had yet a terrible dread of the Pope. How much more now!

I should have sent you a longer letter, but was obliged to devote my last evening to the melancholy employment of composing a Latin inscription for the tomb-stone of poor William, two copies of which I wrote out and enclosed, one to Henry Thornton and one to Mr. Newton. Homer stands by me biting his thumbs, and swears that if I do not leave off directly he will choak me with bristly Greek that shall stick in my throat for ever.

W. C.

LETTER LXVI.
To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 8, 1787.

• I have had a little nervous fever lately, my dear, that has somewhat abridged my sleep; and though I find myself better to-day than I have been since it seized me, yet I feel my head lightish, and not in the best order for writing: you will find me, therefore, perhaps, not only less alert in my manner than I usually am when my spirits are good, but rather shorter. I will, however, proceed to scribble till I find that it fatigues me, and then will do as I know you would bid me do were you here, shut up my desk, and take a walk.

The good General tells me, that in the eight first books which I have sent him, he still finds alterations and amendments necessary, of which I myself am equally persuaded; and he asks my leave to lay them before an intimate friend of his, of whom he gives a character that bespeaks him highly deserving such a trust. To this I have no objection, desiring only to make the translation as perfect as I can make it: if God grant me life and health, I would spare no labour to secure that point. The General's letter is extremely kind, and, both for matter and manner, like all the rest of his dealings with his cousin the poet.

I had a letter, also, yesterday, from Mr. Smith, member for Nottingham. Though we never saw each other, he writes to me in the most friendly terms, and interests himself much in my Homer, and in the success of my subscription. Speaking on this latter subject, he says, that my poems are read by hundreds who know nothing of my proposals, and makes no doubt that they would subscribe if they did. I have myself always thought them imperfectly, or rather insufficiently announced.

I could pity the poor woman who has been weak enough to claim my song. Such pilferings are sure to be detected. I wrote it I know not how long, but I suppose four years ago. The rose in question was a rose given to Lady Austen by Mrs. Unwin, and the incident that suggested the subject occurred in the room in which you slept at the vicarage, which Lady Austen made her dining-room. Some time since, Mr. Bull going to London, I gave him a copy of it, which he undertook to convey to Nichols, the printer of the Gentleman's Magazine. He showed it to a Mrs. C——, who begged to copy it, and promised to send it to the printer's by her servant. Three or four months afterwards, and when I had concluded it was lost, I saw it in the Gentleman's Magazine, with my signature, W. C. Poor simpleton! she will find now, perhaps, that the Rose had a thorn, and that she has pricked her fingers with it. Adieu! my beloved cousin.

W. C.

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